

BV  
210  
065

# The Most Dynamic Thing in the World

A Study of Prayer

BY  
ARTHUR T. O'REAR



COKESBURY PRESS

NASHVILLE, TENN.

1925

COPYRIGHT, 1925  
BY  
LAMAR & BARTON

---

Printed in the United States of America

To My Wife  
WHOSE BEAUTIFUL LIFE  
OF  
INTERCESSORY PRAYER  
HAS BEEN MY CONSTANT INSPIRATION AND  
MOST EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE  
IN  
ANY LITTLE SERVICE I MAY HAVE RENDERED  
MY LORD

## FOREWORD

THE substance of the brief studies presented here constituted a series of lectures given at the Vesper Services of the Epworth League Institute of the Pacific Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, at Mount Hermon, Calif., in July, 1923. The notes of these addresses have been gathered here and are sent forth in the earnest hope and with the prayer that they may inspire somebody to undertake that most dynamic and most neglected of all forms of Christian service.

I am quite aware that they are not finished essays. They do not present unanswerable arguments for prayer. They have come out of the heart of a busy pastor. There has been great difficulty in finding time to prepare them for the press; but at last they have assumed the present shape and are sent, more as a *testimony* than as a teaching. Our conclusions in these discussions have been arrived at, not from a mere theoretic or academic consideration, but they have been formed through the fire of practical experience.

I may be indulged a very sacred and personal testimony. At the very moment when these



8     *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

talks were being given I was testing in a most trying personal way the value of prayer. My wife was lying desperately ill of a trouble that could be relieved only by an operation. Her condition was such that an operation was admitted to be most hazardous and I had removed her from the hospital under protest from the attending physician and with his assurance that she could live only a few weeks if she were not operated upon. Those who heard these lectures will recall the conditions under which they were delivered. With no other help than that given by God, in answer to prayer, my wife was raised up and has gone these twelve months and more in the strength of the Lord.

God hears and answers prayer. This is the only excuse I have to offer for sending forth this little book into the stream of literature that is already overcrowded.             A. T. O'REAR.

OAKLAND, CALIF.

## CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	7
I	
Instinctive Prayer.....	11
II	
The Problem of Unanswered Prayer.....	27
III	
Prayer as Communion.....	47
IV	
Creative Prayer.....	59
V	
St. Paul and Prayer.....	74
VI	
The Prayers of Paul.....	93
VII	
The Prayers of Jesus.....	111
VIII	
The Holy Spirit in Prayer.....	126
IX	
The Cross and Prayer.....	141
X	
Cultivating the Practice of Prayer.....	158

## I

### INSTINCTIVE PRAYER

**P**RAYER is one of the primary instincts of the human heart. The first cry of the stricken soul is to God. When a calamity overtakes us and we are in the grip of forces greater than we are able to contend with, we cry instinctively for help. Men may long neglect prayer, may even lose the desire to pray, may lose faith in prayer; and yet, if they are placed in a position of great jeopardy, almost before they realize what they are doing prayer will spring to their lips and find utterance. It may be an almost inarticulate cry, or it may be a strong plea for help; but in some fashion the anguish of the heart will find expression.

In my boyhood I knew a railroad engineer who was not a professing Christian. He did not attend Church and, so far as I knew, he had never had a religious experience, nor had he enjoyed the benefits of a Christian home. He was a man of the world with whom one would never connect the thought of prayer. I doubt if he would ever, by any stretch of the imagination, think of himself as a praying man.

One day there came the news of a dreadful



## 12 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

wreck in which his train was involved and the first report was to the effect that he had been killed. Neighbors hurried in to comfort, as best they could, the stricken family whose grief was pathetic. He was a loving and indulgent husband and father, even if he was indifferent to religion. When their grief was deepest there came the cheering report that he had been found and was alive, though dreadfully hurt.

He had a long period of invalidism, but was finally restored completely and returned to work for the company in whose services he was injured. Some years afterwards I heard him tell the story of his thrilling experience. He did not hesitate to attribute his deliverance from death to God in answer to prayer. This is the story as he told it to me.

On the Norfolk and Western Railroad, in the Virginia mountains, there was in those days a very steep grade known as "Sourwood Mountain." It has been the scene of many accidents. Back in the "nineties" the freight trains of this country were not fully equipped with air brakes. The N. and W. was not at that time completely equipped with this safety appliance. The railroads depended largely upon men to "set" hand brakes on the cars. "Brakemen" in those days were really *brake-*



men. However, at the time of this accident, the rolling stock was in process of being equipped with what was then the new appliance of "air brakes." This engineer was a very kindly disposed man, and he would take time to so "make up" his train as to put all the air-brake equipped cars next to the engine, where they could be connected up with the air appliance, and thus the entire train be controlled without the necessity of using the hand brakes; for it was possible to hold any train, if one-third of it were connected with and responding to the air brakes applied by the engineer. Hand brakemen could then remain in the conductor's "cab" and be comfortable.

On the night of this wreck a cold east rain was falling. It was hard on the trainmen to be out in the storm. Our friend had been given an engine that was faulty in two particulars, though he did not know it. The air brake was not functioning and at certain positions of the engine the whistle would not sound. He "made up" his train with the air-equipped cars at the front, as usual, and "pulled out" on his run. The night was one of Egyptian darkness. He had orders to meet a train at the foot of "Sourwood Mountain." It would be necessary to stop his train and let the one he was meeting pull around on a siding—"saw

## 14 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

by" as the railroad men term it. Part of the train he was to meet would be standing on the main line.

He had not as yet had occasion to use the brakes, and so the discovery that they were faulty was yet to be made. He was running about thirty miles an hour when he came to the descent of the mountain. He applied his air and expected the train to check its speed; but discovered, to his horror, that the brakes were utterly useless and the train leaped forward, gaining momentum with every revolution of the wheels. He seized the whistle cord to sound the alarm and call the brakemen who were dozing around a hot stove in the conductor's "cab," but to his increasing horror he discovered that, although he pulled frantically on the cord, no sound came from the whistle. By this time they were dashing wildly down the mountain, beyond all control, to certain destruction. They were in a deep cut with high embankments, therefore to jump from the train seemed certain death.

Telling me of his experience, he said that there was only one chance on earth. Somewhere down that mountainside a canyon came into the cut from the right and made a crevasse about ten feet wide, and if he could jump so as to alight in there he would be safe. But

how was he to locate this niche of safety in the blackness and the driving storm? And if he should be able to locate it, how could he time his leap from that wild train whose speed was now frightful and increasing? He said there was only one hope on earth and that was in the power of God. Then this careless, irreligious man climbed upon the car next to the engine so as to be in a position to leap—and in the blackness of the night, amid the roar of a wild, runaway train, he deliberately knelt down and called upon the God whom he had utterly neglected. What he said to Him, I do not know; but he testified that a quietness and a relief came over him. He rose and stood a moment on top of the swaying, screaming car, and then, in obedience to an inward impulse, leaped blindly in the Stygian blackness and—landed in the only place on all that mountainside where he could have escaped a terrible death—in that little canyon some ten feet wide.

Hours afterwards he was discovered and carried to a hospital.

The instinct of prayer is inborn and is as real as any other instinct of humanity. It matters not whether the individual be a godless railroad man in America or an army officer in the trenches in France, whether he be a Chinese



## 16 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

boatman in the grip of a typhoon on the Yangtse, or an African Bushman fleeing from an enraged elephant—all alike, in the moment when terror releases the primordial instincts of their nature, cry out to God—the Supreme Being—for deliverance. To be sure, the African and the Chinaman may have a very different idea of the Being to Whom they cry than the Christian has; but the impulse to pray is there.

One of the most interesting characters in all history was a man whose life was marked by a constant cry to God for help. He had a very unusual experience from the beginning. In infancy he was remarkably spared from death, and was adopted by the daughter of the king and was reared in the king's palace. It was his foster mother's intention to make him king at her father's death. But it so happened that his family and their people were slaves, and were being very cruelly mistreated by the king. In the afternoons when he would be out for exercise he used to go down and visit and talk with his relatives. They did not like him very much, because he was having such an easy life while they were toiling and were being so roughly handled. They complained very bitterly about the long hours they had to work and the hard treatment they received.



Now this young man was no parasite, even though he did live in a king's palace, and he had a considerable deal of race and family pride, although his people were in a hard place now. They had not always been so; and he felt that they were superior, after all, to the people they served. It often happens, you know, that the servant is a better man than the one he serves.

This young man **conceived** the idea of leading his people out of their bondage; and so Moses (for that is the man about whom we are talking), "through faith, when he grew to manhood, refused to be known as Pharaoh's daughter's son, having determined to endure ill-treatment along with the people of God rather than enjoy the short-lived pleasures of sin; because he deemed the reproaches which he might meet with in the service of the Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt; for he fixed his gaze on the coming reward. Through faith he left Egypt, not being frightened by the king's anger; for he held on his course as seeing the unseen One." (Heb. xi. 25-27, Weymouth.)

After casting his lot with the people of God, he had the most trying and testing experiences. They did not like him because he had been reared in the king's court, so they murmured and complained about him all the way. To be sure, they left Egypt with him as their leader;

## 18 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

but they had hardly passed its border before they wanted to go back. They criticized him most unsparingly. They refused to respond to many of his calls. Once they were on the point of killing him. When he was up in the mount interceding with God for them, they gladly forgot him and urged Aaron to make them idols for their gods. No reformer or leader of a people ever had as much to endure, and yet for forty years he led them successfully because he was a man of prayer. The record tells us again and again of his praying. When trouble came Moses *prayed* and the Lord opened up a way of deliverance. He instinctively turned to God in these times of trouble and so, as we read his story, we are struck with the words, "Moses fell on his face."

I am quite aware that prayer, in his life, had passed beyond the stage of being *merely* instinctive; but it was that. In his crises (and there were many), with no delay for thought, he instinctively "fell on his face" and cried to God. The fact that he knew God even as a son knows a father but emphasizes the fact that it was natural for him to pray. Instinctive prayer with him was infinitely more than with some others we have discussed. His life was lived in touch with God continually, so he turned in his thought to God in an instant. He

is at one end, while the untaught heathen, who cries out *only instinctively*, is at the other.

The Bible is the most intensely human book ever written. That is one reason why it lives. It is inspired of God, and God moved the writers of the Bible to record the things that are of the deepest human interest. Therefore it is more widely circulated and read than any other book on earth. It is published in more than seven hundred dialects and languages, and the two great Bible Societies, the British and the American, have alone sold more than five hundred million copies, not to speak of the output of private concerns like the Oxford, Bagster, Nelson, and other presses.

This being true, we are anxious to know what subjects the Bible deals with. Prayer is one of its foremost themes. It is mentioned more than five hundred times in the book. In the Old Testament there are forty prayers recorded outside the Psalms. These Psalms, as you know, were sung in the temple worship and they are nearly all prayers set to music. So, if we add the one hundred and fifty Psalms, we have nearly two hundred recorded prayers in the Old Testament. They range from the short, ejaculatory prayer of Nehemiah, uttered four times in his last chapter, to the long prayer offered by Solomon at the dedication of

## 20 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

the Temple, and the longer one of confession offered by the priests and Levites and recorded in Nehemiah. In the New Testament there are thirty recorded prayers, and they range from the brief prayers of invocation uttered by Paul for a Church or individual to whom he is writing, to the wonderful intercessory prayer of our Lord recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John.

So you have the most intensely human book of all the earth dealing largely with the most primordial of human instincts—viz., that of prayer, and not only recording nearly two hundred prayers as they were uttered, but referring in teaching, exhortation, and historical record more than three hundred other times to prayer.

Turning from the Bible to literature which is uninspired, Shakespeare is the greatest English author. Like the Bible, he deals with the human instincts. In fact, the thing that makes a great author is his ability to interpret human nature. If prayer is instinctive in human nature, you will expect the chiefest interpreter of human nature to deal with this subject; and this is exactly what Shakespeare does, for he refers to prayer directly in a very large number of his plays. When his characters get into dire straits, they turn to prayer for relief.



We are not now considering the various kinds of prayer, nor the philosophy of prayer; but only that there is that in our very nature which bids us pray, and all about us is the proof of it.

A chaplain in the English army was talking with an officer who had been brought into the base hospital and who was badly wounded. The officer said: "It is a singular thing, sir, but I had not thought of praying for many years until yesterday; and I prayed then. I asked God to let me hold on for the sake of the men, and He did."

Sometimes prayer is an exceedingly simple thing, often little more than a cry; but it is wrung from the soul of the most stolid in times of distress. You or I may be, as Tennyson puts it,

"An infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light,  
And with no language but a cry."

During the World War thousands of people who had utterly neglected prayer thronged the churches and cathedrals crying out the misery of their souls to God.

The House of Parliament in England had been considering a resolution to abolish the custom of having a chaplain and of opening their sessions with prayer, and it was about to be

## 22 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

adopted when the World War broke out. As a result of the humbling of the nation and their sense of helplessness in the grip of tremendous forces, they dropped their plan and decided to continue the custom of calling upon God.

In October, 1918, the world was in the midst of the mightiest and bloodiest conflict it had ever seen. Millions of men were hurling death at each other. All the forces of hell were loosed, and no man could foresee what was to come. At that time the *Los Angeles Times*, certainly not a religious journal, had a most remarkable editorial. It was entitled "Christ's Gray General"; and because it emphasizes the fact that, in their extremity, men turn to God, I want to give you the substance of it.

As in the days of the Revolutionary War, when the colonies of America were struggling for life, George Washington was often seen upon his knees at Valley Forge, so in the great struggle that well-nigh wrecked civilization "Christ's Gray General," Ferdinand Foch, was often upon his knees in France—the weight of responsibility drove him there. And so the *Los Angeles Times* said:

As the tide of battle turns more and more from doubt and anxiety to the certainty of victory, there looms with startling vividness in the world's imagination the figure of one man whose genius has exceeded

that of any other soldier of whom time has made record. This man is Ferdinand Foch—the gray man of Christ. . . .

It seems to be beyond all shadow of doubt that when the hour came in which all that Christ stood for was to either stand or fall, Christ raised up a man to lead the hosts that battled for Him.

Whoever does not realize this and see it clearly as a fact, he does but blunder stupidly. . . .

When the war is ended, if you will look for Foch in some quiet church, it is there he will be found humbly giving God the glory and absolutely declining to attribute it to himself.

Can that kind of a man win a war? Can a man who is a practical soldier be also a practical Christian?

If you were to know a man who came home every night with a bag filled with gold nuggets, you would naturally be curious to know where he went to get them.

In the same way, when you see a soldier winning battles you are curious to know from what source comes his genius.

Where, then, does Foch go for strength and magical power to bring home the marvelous victories he has won and is still winning over Prussia and the unholy alliances she has made?

Then this editorial writer goes on to recite the story, now famous, of the private soldier who saw the general of the Allied armies on his knees in a church in France, and continuing says:

During that three-quarters of an hour that the generalissimo of all the Allied armies was on his knees

## 24 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

in humble supplication in that quiet church, 10,000 guns were roaring at his word on a hundred hills that rocked with death.

Millions of armed men crouched in trenches or rushed across blood-drenched terrains at his command; generals and field marshals, artillery, cavalry, engineers, tanks fought and wrought across the map of Europe absolutely as he commanded them to do, and in no other manner, as he went into that church to pray.

The story is continued at great and interesting length in that splendid editorial. The whole substance of it is that in the time when catastrophe loosed the native instincts of the human heart, even the secular newspapers found room for the record of the appeal to God in prayer of the Supreme Commander of all the Allied forces.

The greatest general of all time, in charge of the greatest army the world ever saw, engaged in a struggle that shook the foundations of the universe, found time to spend three-quarters of an hour in prayer.

But did not the great Apostle who, more than any man, braved perils of all sorts by land and sea, in the wilderness and in the city, find that he could not go forward except as he prayed? And did not our Lord, who came to earth on the mightiest mission that ever engaged human attention, and whose life work was compressed into the narrow realm of three years, find it



necessary to take whole nights for prayer? It is even so. Prayer is at once the most basic and primary instinct of the human heart and the most essential.

“Speak to Him, thou, for he hears,  
And Spirit with spirit can meet;  
Closer is he than breathing,  
And nearer than hands and feet.”

Truly prayer is a native, primordial instinct of the human heart. It is one of the things that have been retained from the beginning of the race. The human family has been scattered and some portions have sunk into the depths of ignorance and superstition; but no matter what the condition of the race, tribe, or individual, there is retained as a heritage from the Creator this instinct to cry to the Great All-Father in time of need.

The ancients made their sacrifices and offered their prayer for help in their time of extremity. The most darkened tribe in the jungle have their rites and incantations. When we pray, we are yielding to that native human impulse and it is truly the

“One touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.”

But our prayers should never be neglected until wrung from us by the time of tragedy. By as much as our conception of God transcends

26 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

that of the Bushman, by so much should our intelligent, Spirit-inspired prayer transcend his.

It is our purpose in this study to learn something of what real prayer is, and how best to pray.

“O Thou by whom we come to God—  
The Life, the Truth, the Way;  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;  
Lord, teach us how to pray.”

## II

### THE PROBLEM OF UNANSWERED PRAYER

**I**T becomes imperative in any study of this subject of praying to consider the problem of unanswered prayer; for there are thousands of people who, because of the fact that they have prayed earnestly for something and have not received it, have given up prayer altogether. And there is always the danger with young Christians, just beginning the prayer life, that they will come to grief at this point. If they conceive the idea that whatever request they make is going to be granted, and then begin to ask for this, that, and the other thing, only to find that most, if not all, their petitions are unanswered, they lose faith and give up praying.

Some years ago I met a movie actor who had just this experience. Long before there were any movies he was on the legitimate stage. His family consisted of two sisters and a widowed mother and he was their support. The younger sister was an idol of his. One day he was called home to see this baby sister, who was very ill

and thought to be dying. In early life he had been at least a nominal Christian, so he instinctively and immediately took the case to God. All the way home he cried out to God to spare that sister. He was earnest in his desire and was full of promises as to what he would do if only God would hear his prayer and spare the loved one. His agony was intense. He thought he meant what he said, and perhaps he did. But the Lord did not see best to spare her. As a result this man threw over any faith in God and religion and continued his career on the stage. He has risen to a prominent place in the "movie world"; but according to his own testimony, he is not and has never been happy.

Is there a satisfactory explanation for this failure to secure results? and if so, what is it?

I believe there is, and that once we have learned the reason, it will inspire us to pray more rather than less.

In the case of the movie actor, his prayer was manifestly a selfish prayer, not offered in submission to the Father's loving will. He wanted the sister healed that he might have the joy of her society, and he could not know what the future held for her. God called her home for reasons known only to himself, and in a spirit of love. To have left her longer in the world might have been anything but good for her or



her devoted but self-willed brother. His breaking with God showed the self-will that was in him, and his actual unfitness longer to direct the girl God had left so long in his charge.

In the first place, we need to learn that *asking for things* is not the whole of prayer, nor is it the highest form. Petition is but one form of the many that prayer takes. It is a very real form and has its place in our lives; but it is not the whole of prayer. When the Psalmist cries out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps. ciii. 1), or again, "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiv. 1), he is offering a prayer of *adoration*. It is prayer; but it is the high prayer of worship.

So likewise is there the prayer of confession, of thanksgiving, and of communion. Each of these is a very real form of prayer and each has its place in the recorded prayers of the Bible. Hence we should never think of prayer as just simply asking for things. Nor should we ever think of *answered prayer* as simply the receiving of certain specified things for which we have asked. Prayer is much more comprehensive than that.

Having said this much, we return now to the question raised by unanswered petitions. This

### 30 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

question cannot be evaded, and we have no desire to evade it. The word of God is very clear on this subject, and when we understand it we shall be helped in our prayer life.

Some would have us believe that we live in a world that is wholly ordered by law, and that there can be no deviation from the fixed laws of nature; that God has set certain metes and bounds beyond which *we cannot* and *he will not* go. So our prayers must be kept within these bounds; and if they pass outside in any petitions, they say we are doomed to disappointment.

James, however, tells us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and then he draws an example from the Old Testament in which the laws of nature were made obedient to the prayers of a man of God, who had power to lock and to unlock the storehouse of the heavens so that it did not rain for three years and six months, and then, when he prayed, the rain came.

Jesus said: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John xiv. 13, 14.) Here is a sweeping promise made to the one who prays. It contains two universals: "Whatsoever" and "anything." There can be no more

wide-sweeping promise than that, and yet it is tied up with a limiting phrase that absolutely controls all that it promises. I used to hesitate on the "whatsoever" and the "anything" in this scripture. It seemed too much to expect; but when I discovered that phrase, I lost all hesitation, and now I say to you, and to anyone, that you can trust this promise absolutely. "Whatsoever—anything" you ask will be granted you. But the controlling phrase "In my name" gives value to the whole prayer.

"In my name" means more than just adding a phrase at the end of your prayer, "For Jesus' sake." We have made that, or a similar phrase, a sort of "Open Sesame" to get our prayers heard. It is not so. "In my name" means everything that Christ is. One reason, therefore, for unanswered prayer is that the petition is not "in my name."

If we could learn that to pray "in his name" is to pray with authority—with all the authority of his completed work—it would give a power to our prayers that would make them availing. Everything that his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, and his intercession mean is involved in that phrase. Did he conquer sin, death, and Satan? Then, in his name, we may also conquer. Did God always hear him ("And I knew that thou hearest me al-

## 32 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

ways"—John xi. 42)? Then, in his name, God will always hear us.

Prayer in his name, then, is a most searching and comprehensive thing, and when really and truly offered is always heard and always answered.

The Epistle of James is a treatise on the subject of unanswered prayer. In chapter iv, 2, 3 he says: "Ye lust"; or, as Weymouth puts it, "Ye covet things and yet cannot get them; you commit murder; you have passionate desires and yet cannot gain your end; you begin to fight and make war. You have not, because you do not pray; or you pray and yet do not receive, because you pray wrongly, your object being to waste what you get on some pleasure or another."

The Christians to whom James wrote in these two respects are characteristic of much of the present-day Church life. They desired things greatly; but they did not pray for them. How characteristic that is of many Christians! You don't pray. Our Churches are poor enough at giving; but there are *fifty* who give for every *one* who really prays.

The next point, however, is the one which concerns our present study chiefly and explains why some who *asked* did not receive. James said: "You pray and yet do not receive, be-



cause you pray wrongly." This sends us back to what our Lord Jesus Christ said about asking "in my name." James said that the end of much praying was to add to our pleasure only that we might consume the result of our petition upon ourselves. This is purely selfish and God hears no such prayers.

Praying "in His name," then, must be unselfish praying. If our prayer originates in our own hearts, and seeks something for ourselves alone, it is selfish and can have no standing in the presence of God. I am sure that if we judged our prayers closely at this point we would find here the answer to a vast majority of our questions about unanswered prayer. S. D. Gordon, in his "Quiet Talks on Prayer," tells a very interesting story which illustrates this point perfectly. A woman in the Middle West was a devout Christian and was much concerned about the salvation of her husband. He was a successful lawyer and a leading politician. He had been elected to Congress and was the favorite candidate for Governor of his State. The time of the campaign was approaching. About this time his wife became very much concerned for his salvation and was praying more earnestly than usual. Heretofore he had never been interested, and was something of a skeptic.

### 34 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

As the wife prayed now, there suddenly confronted her this proposition: "Would you be willing to have your husband give up his profession and his political prospects, with all that it would mean to you socially, and become a minister? to have no certain dwelling place? to move often, as is the lot of ministers in your denomination? Are you willing to surrender the comforts of a fine and well-appointed home for a parsonage?"

These questions searched her heart. She saw that all her praying hitherto had been on a selfish plane. She wanted her husband saved in a dignified way; but to measure up to a test like this was pretty hard. It took time; but finally she surrendered her own way and her worldly ambitions and said: "Yes, Lord, anything of personal sacrifice or poverty, if only you will save him."

In the very hour that she reached that place of decision God began to deal with her husband in Washington. He could not understand the strange impressions that came upon him; but within a very short time he was at home and wonderfully saved. He did enter the ministry and wrought a great work there, and he and his wife had many years of service for the Lord.

Prayer, to reach the ear of God, must be unselfish. Selfish asking is asking amiss.

"I said, 'Let me walk in the fields.'

Christ said, 'No, walk in the town.'

I said, 'There are no flowers there.'

He said, 'No flowers, but a crown.'

I said, 'But the skies are black;

There is nothing but noise and din.'

But he wept as he sent me back;

'There is more,' he said; 'there is sin.'

I said, 'But the air is thick,

And fogs are veiling the sun.'

He answered, 'Yet souls are sick,

And souls in the dark undone.'

I said, 'I shall miss the light,

And friends will miss me, they say.'

He answered, 'Choose to-night

If *I* am to miss you, or they.'

I pleaded for time to be given.

He said, 'Is it hard to decide?

It will not seem hard in heaven

To have followed the steps of your Guide.'

I cast one look at the fields,

Then set my face to the town.

He said, 'My child, do you yield?

Will you leave the flowers for the crown?'

Then into His hand went mine,

And into my heart came He;

And I walk in a light divine

The path I had feared to see."

### 36 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

If prayer is to be "in His name," it must be according to the will of God. It is inconceivable that prayer can be in the name of Jesus, and be contrary to the will of God. Augustine prayed, "O Lord! may I do thy will as if it were my will, so thou canst do my will as if it were thy will."

Jesus said: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.) This "abiding" enables us to blend our wills in His will. The one so abiding asks according to the will of God.

We may not *always know* His will; but we can *always trust* it. His will is *perfect*; and if we are abiding in him, it is *acceptable* also. Because we may not always know it, our prayers must be yielded to his unknown but loving will. In Gethsemane our Lord was in deep agony and he cried out: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is the mountain peak of prayer: to be surrendered to the will of God. Paul besought the Lord three times that the thorn might be removed from his flesh, but he did not get the exact thing for which he asked. He did get something infinitely better. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is immaterial



whether he had this particular interpretation for the delay in answering his prayer now or at a subsequent time, as the exact rendering would seem to indicate: "He *hath* said to me," etc. It was a much better thing for him to have the grace of God abounding in his life than to have deliverance from pain.

Let me say, by way of parenthesis, it is just here that we object to any religion that bases its whole claim on our deliverance from physical suffering, as Christian Science and some other of the healing cults do. God wills sometimes to try us in the fire to purify us. (Isa. xlviii. 10.)

It is not always best to give us the specific thing for which we pray. Our ignorance causes us to cry out often for what is not best for us. Every prayer is answered in kind or in kindness. So that in the last analysis there are no unanswered prayers. God's children are not treated by Him with less consideration than we treat our own children. That is unthinkable. Just as surely as you always answer your child, *God always answers his*. The answer may be "Yes," or it may be "No," or it may be "Wait." The child often asks the father for a thing that is not best for him to have. Perhaps he asks for a thing that will be quite proper for him to have a little later; but he is asking for it prematurely. Then the father must tell him

## 38 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

to wait. So God must sometimes let us wait, or refuse us entirely the thing for which we are asking.

Again there are times when it becomes necessary for God to say "No" to a particular request in order to answer the actual desire of our hearts. Paul's greatest desire was to be conformed to the will of God. Then if God saw that this could better be by his suffering than by his deliverance from his thorn, it was Paul's desire to suffer.

Augustine was a most wicked and profligate young man. His mother was a devout Christian and her heart was breaking over her son's wickedness. Her constant cry to God was for his salvation. She fasted and wept over him. She was ready to die that he might find God; but he was deaf to all her pleading. He determined to take ship and go to Italy. At that time Italy, and particularly Rome, was at its worst. The report of it had spread through the world. Its very wickedness appealed to Augustine and he was determined to go thither. His mother pleaded, but he would not hear. At last, when he went aboard the ship, she fled to the church and poured out her heart to God before the altar that God would not permit him to make the trip, that he would change the boy's heart, or prevent the sailing of the ship,

or in some other way stop him; but while she was on her knees the ship sailed away with the boy aboard. Her petition had failed.

But in Rome was the saintly Ambrose, and Augustine had scarcely reached the city before this godly man got hold of him and led him to Christ.

While the mother was crying to God to stop the journey of her son, God was leading him directly to the place where her lifelong prayer was to be answered. In saying "No" to her *petition*, he was saying "Yes" to her *prayer*.

To be answered, prayer must be subject to the will of God. Sometimes the thing we are asking for is so diametrically opposed to His will for us that there can be no answer other than "No." Such was the case with Moses. He had led the Israelites through the wilderness to the very border of the promised land, and God had said to him, "You cannot go in thither." Moses prayed that the Lord would let him go in; but God refused. He carried him up to the top of Nebo and let him see the land; but Moses died there and God buried him in the land of Moab. We do not know why; but it was not God's will that he should enter there. He was in the land centuries after when he stood on the Mount of Transfiguration in his glorified body and talked with the Lord; but he was

40 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

spared the humiliation of witnessing the many failures of Israel in the Land.

“And had he not high honor?  
The hillside for his pall!  
To lie in state while angels wait,  
With stars for tapers tall!  
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,  
Over his bier to wave,  
And God’s own hand, in that lonely land,  
To lay him in his grave!

In that strange grave without a name,  
Whence his uncoffined clay  
Shall break again—O wondrous thought!  
Before the judgment day,  
And stand, with glory wrapped around,  
On the hills he never trod,  
And speak of the strife that won our life  
With the incarnate Son of God.

O lonely tomb in Moab’s land!  
O dark Beth-peor’s hill!  
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,  
And teach them to be still:  
God hath his mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell,  
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep  
Of him he loved so well.”

Again, James tells us that the answer to our prayer depends upon its being asked in unwavering faith: “But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all



liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (Jas. i. 5-7, R. V.)

A thing may be the will of God for us, and we may be so faint-hearted in our praying that we will not receive it. We are told in Hebrews that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) This simple childlike faith was characteristic of all of George Müller's work. This great apostle of prayer was, on one occasion, crossing the Atlantic. He had an engagement to speak in Montreal on Sunday. Just off the Newfoundland coast the steamer ran into one of the heavy fogs characteristic of that iceberg territory. She had to slow down to half speed, and this would make it impossible for him to reach Montreal in time for his engagement. He went to the captain, a Christian, whom he had come to know quite well, and proposed to him that they retire to Mr. Müller's cabin to pray that God would lift the fog. The captain replied that he was willing, but was unable to go for some little time. Müller thought he detected

## 42 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

a lack of faith in the reply. The captain knew too much of the ways of the sea, and not quite enough of the ways of God, to suppose that prayer would have any effect in dispelling such a fog. He felt like humoring the old preacher, however.

Müller walked away, but returned after some twenty minutes, when the captain said: "I am ready to go now."

"It isn't necessary," replied Müller, "for you do not believe that God would hear us in this thing; and I believe that he has already heard me. So it will not be necessary. The fog will lift quite soon."

Sure enough, it began to rise even then, and in a few minutes the captain called, "Full steam ahead," and they were off. It is needless to say that the Sunday appointment was met. Müller asked "in faith, nothing wavering."

One of the characteristics of the late beloved Bishop Lambuth was his habit of prayer. He carried with him to the day of his death his little "Book of Remembrance" in which were the names of people and of missionary enterprises the world around for which he prayed.

An interesting story is told of the mission which he had in Japan in company with S. H. Wainright, back in the days before Dr. Lambuth was either Missionary Secretary or Bishop.

One day the order came from high official authority in Japan that no more meetings of Christians would be allowed in the city of Osaka. Dr. Lambuth and Brother Wainright did all they could to secure a cancellation of the order, but the officials were obdurate and unrelenting. The missionaries then retired to the room of prayer. Supper time arrived and the Japanese servant came to summon them to their meal; but she fell under the power of prayer. Mrs. Lambuth came to find what was the matter, and she also fell under the same power. After a long season of crying to God, they all rose, went to the Mission Hall, opened it, and at once commenced the meeting. The power of God fell upon the assembly and two of the sons of city officials came to the altar and were converted. Next morning one of the officials in authority came to the Mission and said: "Go on with your meetings; you will not be interrupted." The Osaka daily paper came out with great headlines saying, "The Christians' God Came to Town Last Night!"

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But to be effectual prayer must be offered in faith. In the realm of our prayers we approach omnipotence, for "Prayer can do anything that God can do." What a challenge this is to us to pray! We are

#### 44 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

poor and halting in our service because we turn to everything before we do to prayer. I am profoundly convinced that if we would set about deliberately to learn the secret of prevailing prayer, and if we would practice *praying*, we would accomplish more than we can in any other way.

Most of us look upon prayer as a sort of pious exercise. It is considered as quite all right for us to engage in this exercise now and then. What we need to learn is that prayer is a *dynamic force*; and if we would become proficient in its use, we would be the most efficient in service.

We should deliberately set about learning how to pray. I believe that our Theological Seminaries and Missionary Training Schools could do no better thing than to install a chair of "Applied Prayer." God would honor us in a peculiar way if we would honor him with peculiar trust. Our schools teach everything else but prayer, whereas Jesus Christ taught supremely concerning the value of prayer.

There are hindrances and problems, of course, but these can and should be overcome. It is the overcoming of such that makes us strong.

Not every petition is granted, but every prayer is answered. The answer may be "Yes," or it may be "No," or perhaps "Wait." But



whether the answer be the one or the other, even so, it is an answer. Suppose the child goes to an earthly parent and asks for a thing. Now the thing may not be suited to the child's present state and so must not be granted at present, however suitable it may be for a later time. But suppose the child makes the request. What sort of a parent would that be that would simply ignore the request? The wise father would reason with the child. He would say: "My child, you must wait a bit. This is not best for you *now*. You must trust your father, and in due season you may have the desire of your heart; but not now." So God sometimes tells us to wait. The self-willed child will insist: but discipline comes only by the denial of the request. The child is answered, though the request be denied.

Our petitions are not granted, sometimes, because we "ask amiss." We desire a thing that will not be good for us, or we ask in a selfish way simply to use it for ourselves; then sometimes our petitions are not granted because we "waver" in our asking for lack of faith.

Instead of being driven to give up praying because we do not get the thing we ask for, let us search our hearts and see why God does not comply with our petitions. But let us determine that we will *pray*.

46 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

"I prayed for strength, and then I lost awhile  
All sense of nearness, human and divine;  
The love I leaned on failed and pierced my heart,  
The hands I clung to loosed themselves from mine;  
But while I swayed, weak, trembling, and alone,  
The everlasting arms upheld my own.

I prayed for light; the sun went down in clouds,  
The moon was darkened by a misty doubt,  
The stars of heaven were dimmed by earthly fears,  
And all my little candle flames burned out;  
But while I sat in shadow, wrapped in night,  
The face of Christ made all the darkness bright.

I prayed for peace, and dreamed of restful ease,  
A slumber drugged from pain, a hushed repose;  
Above my head the skies were black with storm,  
And fiercer grew the onslaught of my foes;  
But while the battle raged, and wild winds blew,  
I heard His voice and perfect peace I knew.

I thank Thee, Lord, Thou wert too wise to heed  
My feeble prayers, and answer as I sought,  
Since these rich gifts Thy bounty has bestowed  
Have brought me more than all I asked or thought;  
Giver of good, so answer each request  
With Thine own giving, better than my best."

### III

#### PRAYER AS COMMUNION

**T**HERE are three principal forms of prayer: petition, intercession, and communion.

The first is the form most commonly practiced. It is the simplest, the most direct, and the kind we instantly think of when the subject of prayer is mentioned. In fact, it is the only kind of prayer known to the vast majority of people. If we have difficulty in prayer, the difficulty arises most often because we have asked for something and we have not received it. We begin to doubt if it is possible to ask for certain specific things and get those things.

Petition is a very legitimate and real form of prayer. Jesus said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We have the right to ask for *things*—for material things as well as spiritual things, for he directed us to ask that we may be given "daily bread."

This is an exceedingly commonplace world, after all, and much of our time is occupied with that same question of daily bread. We want to know about the problem of practical living. So

## 48 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

Jesus taught us to ask for the daily need. We have every right, therefore, to ask about these things. It would not be proper to ignore the form of prayer that asks help for myself. Much needless worry and anxiety would be saved us, if we learned better the lesson of taking our little daily needs to him. Nothing lies outside the realm of prayer but that which lies outside the will of God; and our daily help, manifestly, does not lie outside the will of God.

In fact, Paul says to us: "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.)

The boy who is praying for help in his studies, while diligently applying himself, is just as really praying, and asking in the will of God too, as the ripest saint holding communion with the Lord.

One day a man was riding his horse along a very muddy road when he heard a childish voice coming from behind a hedge on the roadside. The voice was repeating the alphabet: "A, B, C, D, E, F, G," etc. This would continue to the end of the alphabet and then begin all over again. Interested, the man stopped and



listened for several minutes. There was no other word, just the alphabet over and over. Finally the rider called out to the speaker and asked what it meant. A little lad about eight years old came to the roadside and said: "I was praying for help. My load here is too heavy for me and I wanted somebody to help me carry it. My mother is dead; but she used to tell me to pray when I needed help. I didn't know how to pray, so I was just saying my 'A, B, C's' to God, and I thought he could put it all together and know just what I wanted; and he did and sent you to help me."

The man, a Christian, gladly took both the boy and the burden upon his horse and carried them safely home. Who will dare to say that God had not heard the simple cry of this child and rewarded his faith?

Petition is real prayer; but, after all, it is concerned with one's self—the deliverance from danger, the supply of some urgent need, the help in time of temptation. All of these are proper subjects for prayer and God will graciously hear and answer the petition.

But intercession is a step higher in the form of prayer. When we pass out of the realm of our own needs and begin to intercede with God for others, we are advancing in the school of prayer.

## 50 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

Intercessory prayer evidently delights the heart of God more than petition, for he gives so much more space to it in his book. No one of us would suppose that most of the praying that has been done in the world is of this character; and yet, when God gave us a book, he recorded for our learning and inspiration more intercessory prayers than any other sort. They are given more in detail so that we may learn *how* to pray.

The highest form of prayer, however, is that of communion. It is here that we pass out of the realm of *asking* entirely and enter into that of worship. When we enter into the experience of prayer communion, we find it impossible to have as much time as we really want in which to pray. We no longer have the experience of trying to find enough things to pray for to fill up our half hour or so of prayer; but we linger long in his presence and we are loath to leave off communing when the time comes that we must give our attention to other matters. It is then we can sing and feel its meaning:

"O the pure delight of a single hour  
That before Thy throne I spend,  
When I kneel in prayer and with Thee, my God,  
I commune as friend with friend."

In this prayer we are so conscious of the presence of God that we seem able, almost, to

reach out and touch him. The world and worldly things sink into the place they should occupy, and the real things stand out, big with meaning. This sort of prayer puts power into our lives beyond our dreams. It is here we get light on life's duties, light on the Word, and power to live. In these days most of us are impatient of anything that does not appeal to our senses and create a "stir"; but it would be worth all our effort if we could lose ourselves for a time in the secret place of communion. The "Fathers of the Desert" used to know something of this sort of praying. Some of the early saints of the Church knew the value of retirement; but somewhere along the line the devil succeeded in turning this blessed retirement into a formal thing, done in a wrong way, and so effected the wrecking of it. Men and women began to go into monasteries and nunneries, and the saner Christians revolted. Protestantism has swung to the opposite extreme, and no time is given for retirement and contemplation.

The preachers of to-day, particularly those in cities and large towns, are kept so busy with committee work, community work, and club work that they can scarcely find time to pray at all; and to wait on God in quietness and communion until the minutes have run into hours seems utterly impossible. If this is true

## 52 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

of the ministry, what can we expect of the laity? And yet, *real power* lies only in waiting upon God.

When Paul was converted on the Damascus highway, he went into Arabia and was there three years. There can be no doubt that the time spent there was given to meditation and prayer, so that when he came forth it was with *power*.

The life of our Lord was lived in constant communion with the Father. He spent whole nights in prayer; he frequently arose early in the morning and went forth into the desert to pray; he withdrew from the people and went away to the quiet places. The Garden of Gethsemane was a favorite place of retirement for him. If such constant communion was necessary and a source of help to him, how can we expect to get along without it?

We starve our souls and wonder that we do not have spiritual power. The tragedy of it all is that, being long accustomed to this spiritual darkness, we lose our spiritual eyes and are like the fish in Mammoth Cave, which have readjusted themselves so as to live without eyes. The very atmosphere of the religious world to-day is surcharged with a spirit of independence of God—with a self-sufficiency that grieves the heart of God. Men no longer be-



lieve that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." The Church of to-day is believing and saying that it is by might and power, and much time is spent to develop these qualities and very little time given to cultivating the acquaintance of the Spirit.

Some years ago a play which represented a man who had died, and was trying to communicate with a child left behind, was quite popular on the stage. The scenes were intense. He would be seen as a spirit trying to speak a warning, to give advice, to help in a time of need, and the one in the flesh could not hear or feel the warning. It was a very dramatic thing.

This father, in a way, represents God. He seeks to communicate his message to us, to help us in time of need, to give us power; but we are so occupied with ourselves and our own plans that he cannot get our attention. O that we might learn how to wait on him! "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Abraham knew the secret of communion with God. He can be traced through history by the altars he built; and so God calls him his friend. When the destruction of Sodom was

## 54 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

determined upon, God said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?"

Isaac knew the secret of communion with God, and we read of his going out in the field in the evening to meditate. (Gen. xxiv. 63.)

Moses knew this secret in a wonderful way, and so remarkable was his experience that it was said of him that he was one whom the Lord knew face to face.

In fact, every great character of the Bible knew the secret of communion with God, and his prayer life was rich in this fellowship. It is thus that great characters are built.

Every outstanding individual of Church history knew the secret place of power and had rich experiences of communion. Luther, Calvin, Melanchthon, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Moody—call the roll and every man who has had real "lifting power" in his service has had large acquaintance with the place of communion.

The first Psalm tells us that the man who meditates in the law of the Lord day and night shall be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." One of the most striking points of the likeness of a Christian to a tree is in this: the source of the supply of life in each case is *hidden*.

The tree stands there by the stream, a thing of beauty and grace as it waves gently in the breeze. Laden in the springtime with blossoms and in the autumn with its ripened fruit, it is a parable of bounty and blessing. But the secret of its power to blossom and bear fruit in spite of the drought of summer lies in its hidden life. Reaching far down beneath the surface of the earth where it stands, its roots seek and gather the pabulum for its nourishment and transmit it through trunk and limb and branch to the globules of golden glory at the end of the twig. So, the fruitful Christian finds in the secret place of prayer, hidden away behind the closed door, the spiritual pabulum that nourishes growth and grace and fruit.

There is a very suggestive word in the New Testament translated "fellowship." In 1 John i. 7 we are told that "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sin." (Emphatic Diaglott translation.) The word "fellowship" here is the same word Peter uses when he says that we are "partakers of the divine nature." The word is "koinonia." It literally means to "take part of"—to "have communion." So, by a deep prayer life, we have communion

and fellowship with God, or literally become "partakers of the divine nature."

It is this that enriches our lives both for victorious living and for service. We are anxious to have power, and yet we neglect the very source of power. I went into a garage the other day where they specialize on electrical equipage. In one corner was a row of batteries from automobiles sitting quietly upon a shelf. They were set aside from service. They were not helping to drive the machines of which they were a part and even their places in those machines were occupied by others. They were in process of being recharged. This recharging is rather a slow process, but a very essential one. After a certain length of time those batteries would be ready to go back in the machines, full of power and ready to do their full share in the work.

We need to go aside into the quiet place of waiting upon God in order to be charged with power. The Christian who does not know this secret is a powerless Christian. He may be a very busy one, and sometimes even a noisy one, but never a powerful one.

Communion is a reciprocal thing. Each participant contributes his part. We speak, God speaks. He listens to us and we listen to him. Prayer becomes a conversation. When



we really learn this secret we do not have the trouble that the little boy had who refused one night to "say" his prayers. His mother reasoned with him about it and urged him, and he finally said: "I am not going to 'say' them any more. It's just talking into the empty air."

The beauty of communion is that we are conscious of the presence and response of God.

"I have a friend so precious,  
So very dear to me;  
He loves me with such tender love,  
He loves so faithfully!  
I could not live apart from him,  
I love to feel him nigh;  
And so we dwell together,  
My Lord and I.

Sometimes I'm faint and weary;  
He knows that I am weak,  
And as he bids me lean on him,  
His help I gladly seek;  
He leads me in the paths of light  
Beneath a sunny sky;  
And so we walk together,  
My Lord and I.

I tell him all my sorrows,  
I tell him all my joys;  
I tell him all that pleases me,  
I tell him what annoys.

58 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

He tells me what I ought to do,  
He tells me what to try;  
And so we walk together,  
My Lord and I.

I have his yoke upon me,  
And easy 'tis to bear;  
In the burden which he carries  
I gladly take a share;  
For then it is my happiness  
To have him always nigh;  
We bear the yoke together,  
My Lord and I."

This beautiful poem expresses the life of communion in a most natural and helpful manner. John (xvii. 3) says it is life eternal to "know God"—not just to know *about* him, but to *know him*, and we can only know him as we commune with him in the secret place of prayer. As a result of such waiting there comes into the soul a quietness and a confidence that give courage and power to do the will of God.

## IV

### CREATIVE PRAYER

THERE is but one Creator, the Omnipotent God. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." He made the world and all that in it is. He scooped the bed of the sea and piled up the mountains. He hung the heavens with stars and carpeted the earth with grass. He stood at the beginning amid the chaotic ruins of the prehistoric creation, and from the absolute darkness he spoke the enabling command, "Let there be light," and light sprang forth. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." He is the only Creator, and "beside him there is none other."

How God has created all things we know not, save that he has told us that it is by "the word of his power." Man has never discovered the secret of his creative power, so he must content himself with simply knowing that God is omnipotent—all-powerful. He is able to do anything that seems to him desirable to do. Certain of his marvelous acts we call miracles, because we know no other name for them. Per-

## 60 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

haps if we understood them they would seem as simple to us as some of the "miracles" of science. He has a source of power altogether unknown to us and he uses it when he chooses.

The Angel of the Lord challenged the doubt of Abraham with the question, "*Is anything too hard for God?*" This is a perfectly legitimate question. Our answer to it will depend upon our conception of God. If we have a Biblical, orthodox conception of God, we shall be able to say that certainly nothing is too hard for him. He is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Nothing is beyond him. When he chooses to do a thing, he does it. There are no limitations to this except such as he has voluntarily placed there.

Our creating God is the All-Powerful God. But there is one sphere in which he has been pleased to include man in the capacity of partnership in his creation. That is the sphere of prayer.

I want to say something now that, because of its simplicity, will make no impression whatsoever. The very simplicity of this thing I am about to say is such that you will admit, "Yes, that is true," and immediately forget all about it. It is a sentence with but one word in it of more than one syllable, and therefore easy to remember and—easy to *forget*. It is a

thing that, because you have heard the like so often, is a sort of a platitude, and therefore has no power to stir up your mind to receive it. It may seem so absurd to you that you will dismiss it without considering it. It is of the character of sayings that you can hear in church and never wake up to their significance until it is too late; and then, when you try to recall them, they are so simple and easy to forget that they are gone.

You can almost guess the thing that I am going to say, and perhaps you have already guessed it. It is a little sentence, but a profound truth. Indeed so profound is this truth that, if you get nothing else from these studies and do get this, it will be worth your while. Do you still wonder what it is? It is this: "Prayer can do anything that God can do!"

Now is that not a profound thing? If God is omnipotent, this means that, in the realm of our prayers, we too are omnipotent! That is no ordinary or little thing, even if the sentence which sets it forth is simple or little. This means that, if God is the Creator, then, in the realm of our prayers, we, too, are creators!

Nothing little about that! I wonder if it is true? I believe it is, and so I have dared to speak of Creative Prayer. In what sense, then, is prayer creative?



## 62 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

In a threefold sense: First, in relation to our own character; second, in relation to our Church; and third, in relation to other souls everywhere.

As to our own character, prayer has a subjective influence that reacts upon the one who prays and creates in him a character of integrity, purity, and benevolence. No man is ever mean and dishonest in his prayer time. When he comes into the presence of God and realizes that he is alone with the One who sees all and knows all, before whose eyes "all things are naked and open," he does not care to profess what is insincere and untrue, much less does he indulge hatred of any living soul. So Jesus in the upper room that night before the crucifixion spoke of prayer three times and of love a score of times.

It is in our prayer time that we rise out of our mean and ignoble selves and aspire to high things—and that is just the difference between ambition and aspiration. Ambition moves off on the plane of selfishness, and aspiration moves Godward. The oftener we are in the place of holy aspirations, the deeper will these be fixed upon us, and so our own character, building in the golden material, will tend to become golden.

It is characteristic of human nature to en-

deavor to carry out in action what has become deeply conceived.

When one is often in the place of prayer, one develops the Christian graces. "Religion is caught, not taught"; and so when one is exposed to the fellowship of one's Lord, one can never be the same again. Prayer is thus creative. It builds our own character.

One of the ancient religions had a prayer room in which incense was kept burning continually. When one spent much time in this prayer room, the odor of the incense permeated his clothing, and when he came out the people revered him because he had been closeted with God. This was an artificial way to testify to divine fellowship. There is a real way.

Paul tells us that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance" (Gal. v. 22), and if we spend time in prayer, these things will mark our lives; and, after all, our chiefest contribution to the welfare of the world is our own spiritually developed characters.

The greatest apostle of prayer since Christ and Paul, perhaps, was George Müller, of Bristol, England. He built up and supported a work for orphan children, taking care of some two thousand of them, and he never had a cent of endowment or guarantee for his work, but

## 64 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

supported it wholly by prayer. In his youth he was a liar and a cheat. He stole money and misappropriated other funds and was thoroughly wicked. At twenty-one years of age he was converted, and his life of constant prayer made him a man so scrupulously honest that, in the administration of his orphanage, he would not use funds for one purpose when they had been contributed for another, even when the need was most pressing and it would be but borrowing the money for a brief time.

More than any siren's song we are lured to make real in our lives what lives in our hearts.

We are now speaking solely of the effect of the prayer habit in a subjective sense. It develops our characters because we wait on God. But when the things for which we pray are graciously granted to us by God, our faith is developed and we are encouraged because we receive the things for which we seek.

In the next place, prayer is creative in the sense that it makes an atmosphere in our Church in which God can work.

Scientists tell us that the rays of the sun come to us across a chasm 93,000,000 miles in extent and absolutely dark. This same sunshine that falls about us so sweetly and illumines our world so brightly passes meaningless and empty of value through all this vast darkness. The

reason of this is that there is no atmosphere there to break up and refract this light, and so it travels incognito until it strikes a planet enswathed in atmosphere, and only then does it function as light. So it is with God's power.

Jesus was unable to do any mighty works in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people. Unbelief always hindered his work, and always hinders it to-day. The reason our churches have no more power than they do is because we do not have the atmosphere of expectation.

That quaint preacher of early Methodism, Billy Bray, was at the home of a brother on one occasion and in the afternoon he said to this brother: "I am sorry you have had such a serious disappointment to-day."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the brother. "I've had no disappointment to-day."

"O yes, you have," said Billy. "You asked the Lord in prayer this morning that you might be kept sweet and gentle all day, and I see by the way things have been going that you have had a serious disappointment."

"O," said his friend, "I thought you meant something particular."

In other words he was just "saying his prayers" that morning.

A young preacher once went to C. H. Spurgeon and said: "Mr. Spurgeon, why is it that I

66 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

don't have souls saved as well as you? I am in earnest as truly as you are and I want to see people saved; I preach to that end and I pray; but I don't see results."

"You don't expect to see somebody saved every time you preach, do you?" said Spurgeon.

"O no; but sometimes"—

"That is just why you don't," said the great preacher. "I never go into my pulpit but that I expect someone to be saved."

Spurgeon's people expected it too, and their prayers and faith created an atmosphere in which God could work—and he is always looking for such opportunities.

One of the great scientists found over sixty thousand seeds in a cup of mud taken from the bottom of a pond—perfectly good seeds, all the germ of life and its possibilities there; but conditions such that they could not germinate, and so they were lost forever.

The seed of the gospel is given out Sunday after Sunday; but it fails because the atmosphere is uncongenial and so it cannot produce results.

We hold it in our power to recreate our churches and make them centers of power by praying.



## PRAYER CAN DO ANYTHING THAT GOD CAN DO!

The trouble with us is that we neglect prayer in our own lives and consequently our Church is devoid of power. We are too hurried to pray. We are busy about everything but the greatest thing of all. President Wilson once said: "It is sometimes a very troubling thought that in the rush of modern life we scarcely have time to think of our individual souls. . . . It is a very serious thing that there are so few minutes in the twenty-four hours when we can pause to think of God and the eternal issues of the life that we are living; for the thing that we call civilization sometimes absorbs and hurries whole populations to such an extent that they are constantly aware that they are not breathing the air of spiritual inspiration which is necessary for the expansion of their hearts and the salvation of their souls."

This hurry and consequent neglect of prayer on our part reacts upon the life of the Church so that there is lacking a deep spiritual tone to our Church work. The atmosphere, instead of being surcharged with power as it should be, is often formal or frivolous, and nothing of an abiding character is done. *We don't expect anything to be done.* Our unbelief cripples God just as really in the twentieth century as it did in the first.

No condition, no situation is hopeless, unless it is hopeless to God. His power is striking through the earth; but it becomes effective only where there is an atmosphere. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.)

At this moment the air all about us and above us is alive with voices, music, code, and what else we do not know. Ships are calling to each other. Government business in code is flying over. There is news for the papers and music for everybody. We are not hearing it—not participating, because conditions are not right. If we should string an aërial across the building, connect our instruments, and tune in, we should have the pleasure of it all. Just so, when the congregations gather, God is there. Just above our heads the heavens are full of blessings for us. God is anxious—O so anxious!—to bless us; but we miss his blessing so often because conditions are not right. The atmosphere about us is "dead." There is no response to his movements and nothing happens. O yes, we have our songs, say our prayers, preach our sermons, close our meetings, and felicitate ourselves upon the success of the services; but nothing has been done. A hungry

soul has gone out of the meeting unsaved. It may be that he will be eternally lost. A boy or girl in the grip of a mighty temptation has not been set free, and so the struggle ends disastrously—not because God is impotent, but he has no atmosphere of faith in which to work.

Beloved reader, has your church led a soul to Christ this year? Did you have any thought that it would? Are you disappointed, or has it occurred to you to expect that?

The tragedy is that we sometimes do not think of that as a part of the regular work of the Church at all. We are content to leave that to a special revival effort. We think that occasionally there ought to be a series of special meetings, and at such time souls may regularly seek and find the Lord; but it is not to be attempted at all, far less expected at other times. Many of our churches would be thrown into a panic if the "regular" Sunday morning service should be broken into by some needy soul crying out to God for salvation. O that we might learn a better way than we usually have!

Finally, prayer is creative in its relation to others.

The highest form of service is that of intercession. It is here that prayer reaches almost its highest level and accomplishes most. Our

petitions are for ourselves and are not wholly free from selfishness. We pray when we are in need and our prayer is that we may be delivered; but in intercession we are crying out for others. It is here that we enter into fellowship with our Lord. His present work, carried on in glory, is intercession. We are told in Hebrews that he is able to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

Of all the prayers recorded in the Bible, the largest number are prayers of intercession. Through intercession we create conditions that make possible the work of God on behalf of others.

In Paul's letters there is constantly a cry that the individuals or Churches to whom he is writing should pray for him. He valued most highly the prayers of his converts. Persons who, a little while before, had been in the grossest heathenism, he urged to pray for him. He calls the attention of the Corinthian Church to the fact that they helped by prayer. Intercession makes possible for others what would not be possible otherwise.

The poet says: "Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

In intercession we reach out and out, until we embrace the entire world for which Jesus died. We can just as really spend an hour, *potentially*, in Tokio or Shanghai or Calcutta or Wembo-Nyama as if we were there, and our intercession will create conditions there that enable God to work. It is not exaggeration to say:

“Away in foreign lands they wondered how  
Their feeble words had power;  
At home the Christians, two or three,  
Had met to pray an hour.”

We never shall know in this world the power nor the results of intercessory prayer.

Another interesting and very challenging story of S. D. Gordon's is that of a bedridden saint of God who lived in London and was a member of a large church for which she had a great burden. It was at the time when D. L. Moody was just coming into prominence in Chicago, and before he had been abroad.

This woman had seen a published sermon of Moody's and she began praying that God would send him to her church. One, two, three years slipped away, and every Sunday she inquired of her sister, with whom she lived, if there was any “special move to-day.” And every Sunday the same reply, “None.”



## 72 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

At last, one Sunday, the sister said in response to the usual query: "No; but there was a visiting minister in the pulpit."

"Who was he?" inquired the invalid.

"An American, named Moody," was the startling answer.

The invalid said: "Do not bring me any dinner to-day." Then, after years of praying for Moody to come, she set herself to what Gordon calls "a bit of siege prayer," and the result was that the evening service resulted in more than a hundred conversions and the beginning of Moody's great work in England.

Her work of intercession had told most marvelously for God.

We are prone to be impatient with anything that does not have the sound of machinery, and our largest vision is one of "Service." By service we too often mean mere activity—"busy-ness." We look for men who are "go-getters," who "do things"; but the biggest *doing* on earth is *the doing of intercession!* It is the prevailing with God in the place of prayer, and it is there alone that we approach omnipotence!

So prayer is creative in respect to our own characters, in respect to our local church, where we may create an atmosphere for him to work, and in relation to other souls and the world.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take;  
What parchèd grounds refresh as with a shower!  
We kneel—and all about us seems to lower;  
We rise—and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear!  
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others, that we are not always strong;  
That we are ever overborne with care;  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with thee?"

## V

### ST. PAUL AND PRAYER

**N**EXT to our Lord Jesus himself, Paul is easily the greatest figure in the New Testament, if not in the entire Word. His life was the most effective of any man of ancient times, and his great missionary journeys did more to shape the history of the world than any journeys undertaken by any other man at any time.

Born in the city of Tarsus—"no mean city"—he was from infancy moving among the busy tides of life. He was essentially a city man, and the history of his life may be arranged around five big cities: Tarsus, Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, and Rome. In his ministry he touched and influenced many other cities. For a time he resided at Corinth and also at Ephesus. His early life was crowded full of the teaching of the Old Testament and the sayings of the Rabbis, for he was brought up a Pharisee of the strictest sort and bred to the law. He advanced beyond many of his own age and early found a place in the Sanhedrin. He was certainly of a wealthy family and of an ambitious nature;

and a bright future, as judged by the standards of his home and friends, was expected for him.

Our first introduction to him is when he is presiding at the execution of Stephen. Then we see him making havoc of the Church in Jerusalem. Finally, having destroyed the Church there, at least as a public institution, he goes to Damascus armed with authority from the high priest to stamp out the heretical sect of the "Nazarenes" who were there.

It is as he approaches the city, about noon, that he is smitten from his horse, and, falling to the earth, he finds himself face to face with the glorified Lord. In great astonishment he asks what he is to do, and is sent into the city and told that directions will be given him there. A servant of the Lord, Ananias, is told then to go and call for Saul. Ananias is afraid at first; but he is reassured and the Lord says: "Behold, he prayeth." Ananias obeys; Saul is brightly converted, his sight is restored, and he goes away into Arabia, later returning and preaching in the synagogue at Damascus until he has to flee for his life. Then soon begins the ministry of the most wonderful character, save one, who ever lived.

It is not our purpose here to give a biography of Paul. That has been well done so often that one needs but turn to the bookshelves

to find whatever one may wish of that sort. It is rather our purpose to study the relationship of this man (concerning whom God said, "Behold, he prayeth") to the subject of prayer.

Paul mentions prayer more than forty times in his epistles; and of the thirty prayers recorded in the New Testament, a dozen are his. It was true of him, as it was of his Lord, and of all great souls who have achieved for God, that his greatest experiences came to him when he prayed.

First of all, let us consider his conversion. He had been smitten with deep and thorough conviction and repentance when he met the Lord on the highway; but it was not until Ananias came and laid his hands on him that the light came and he was truly converted. What hours of praying he had spent and how he had surrendered every human prospect in those hours, no one can imagine unless he has been through a similar experience. It was deep and genuine and never had to be repeated. It is not surprising that one who has been through such an experience should set a great value on prayer.

Another great experience which came to him in his prayer time was some three years after this when he had gone up to Jerusalem burning with a passion for his own beloved Israel—a



passion that never died out, but that was always in his heart. He felt that he could most certainly win the Jews to faith in Christ. And why not? Had he not been the ringleader in persecution of the followers of the Christ? Had he not shown by many infallible proofs that he was genuinely and deeply religious and sincere? Was he not a disciple of that famous Doctor of the Law, Gamaliel? If, then, he, a Pharisee of the strictest school and with a life about which there was no question, should tell them of his experience and of his new-found faith, they would surely believe. So, flaming with a passion for their salvation, and with the love of Christ, he begins his witnessing. Things do not go very well. He goes up into the temple to pray, and while praying the Lord appears to him again and he is given instructions: his is to be a ministry "far hence to the Gentiles." He has a hard time getting to the place of fully accepting; but he does so, and thus the second great vision has come, *and at a time of prayer.*

If we are to live in the "Valley of Vision" (Isa. xxii. 1) and hear God's voice speaking to us, we must pray. The poverty of the average Christian experience is easily understood when one knows the little time people actually spend in prayer!

## 78 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

As little as Christian people read the Bible, they do ten times as much of that as they do of praying. Somehow there seems to be a willingness to do anything else, rather than pray. How strange! Yet, when we study the lives of the saints and see how they reached the mountain-top experiences and came to visions and to glory in their prayer time, our hearts are hungry for similar blessings. We can have such if we will pay the price of prayer.

These two instances will be as much as we will study of his own experiences of prayer, though we might see how he lived in its very atmosphere. So natural was it to him that he unconsciously glides into prayer as he writes, and practically every epistle opens and closes with a brief petition for the individual or Church whom he is addressing.

Having looked briefly at his own experiences in the time of prayer, let us glance hastily through his epistles and see something of the estimate he has of prayer as expressed in his exhortations and teaching.

We find him urging those to whom he writes to pray for him. Even when he is writing to reprove them he does not despise their prayers. The Thessalonian Church was in a bad way. They had become confused over the subject of the coming of the Lord, and of the resur-

rection, and some had become idlers (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12); but even so, Paul craves for them an earnest and faithful Christian life, and for himself a place in their prayers. He knew that there is nothing which develops Christians so much as a full and effective prayer life. He knew, too well, the frailty of the human heart and life to despise the prayers of even the faultiest and humblest.

Perhaps in all the number of the Pauline Churches none had so many or such glaring faults as the Church of Corinth. There are many reasons for this. The condition of the city was not conducive to piety. It was the chief port of call for ships plying the Mediterranean; and in those days Rome was at the height of its voluptuousness. Ships from Egypt with everything to minister to this condition of the depraved and wealthy Romans were constantly calling at this port. The streets were full of vendors of all sorts of luxuries. Slaves abounded in great numbers. Laxity of morals was the rule. Not only were there these outward suggestions and opportunities; but the people themselves, who made up the Church, had a history of sin that tended to limit or weaken any strong personal convictions against these things. So his first epistle to them is full of reprimand and counsel; and yet, even with

all their faults, he attributes much of the blessing that came to him in his deliverances in Asia to their faithfulness, saying, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us." (2 Cor. i. 8-11.)

He appreciates the value of prayer so much that he is constantly urging these disciples of his to practice it.

But we want to examine some of his direct teaching in regard to prayer. There are seven outstanding things in his instructions on this subject.

First of all he says: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." What a confession to make! Simple enough for one of us to admit that we know not how to pray as we ought; but for Paul! This only impresses upon us, what we are prone to forget, that the saints of the Bible were *men*—men of like passions with ourselves, but men wholly given to God. So we may be. Paul voices the feeling of every true praying soul in these words. We, truly, do not know what to pray for as we ought.

Sometimes a prayer rises up in our hearts that we do not even know how to express. We are dumb before our God; not because there is no prayer in our hearts, but because we do not know how to express the prayer that is there.

Then it is that the "Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities."

This is the logical starting point for a treatise upon prayer. No one can really set himself to study a thing until he realizes his need as well as lack of information upon the subject.

The next logical step then is to know that we must pray "with the Spirit and the understanding."

The human spirit must enter into prayer. There must be fervency and earnestness if the prayer is to have any real value. Unless I feel my prayer, no one else will. Certainly God will not. This is the curse of the merely formal prayer. Sometimes we learn a score of platitudes and repeat them over and over until they are worn threadbare. How much of our public praying in church and even in the family circle is like that! It differs not one whit from the superstitious pagan's turning of his prayer wheel. It is a sort of pious mummary that we rely upon as a charm, like the "Open Sesame!" of our Arabian Nights times, to open the storehouse of God's blessings. But the fact remains that nothing happens. We are not greatly disappointed, for, to be perfectly honest with ourselves, we did not expect anything to happen. If it had happened, we should have been greatly surprised.



## 82 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

This is NOT praying, and the sooner we learn it and give up the practice of such, the better for our souls and for all concerned.

Prayer, to have any value, must be "with the spirit." It must be "effectual, fervent" praying, as James says; and when it is so, God will hear.

But to accomplish the most for God, it must also be "with the understanding." There must be intelligent praying. Of course a true, heartfelt prayer will be heard by God, and will accomplish something; but to reach the highest point of effectiveness, the intellect must also enter in. No one can pray as effectually as he ought unless he knows the Word. The Lord loves to have his own Word argued before him as a reason for his granting an answer. Study the prayers of the Bible and this will be clear.

To be an effectual intercessor for the mission fields, one needs to know the needs of these fields. To know the *names* of the mission stations and even of the workers will add greatly to one's ability to plead effectively in their behalf.

If we were going to have an interview with the President of the United States, or with the King of England; and particularly, if we were going to make request for some boon, we should most certainly give some thought to an in-

telligent ordering of our speech. Shall we do less when we are to speak to the "King of kings"? We absolutely treat our God with irreverence, and yet hope to have him bless us! May God himself lead us to a better way!

Again, Paul tells us that men are to pray "everywhere." (1 Tim. ii. 8.) That means, primarily of course, every place of devotion; but there is nothing in the original to limit it to such places only. It is a general term of place and clearly means that we should pray wherever we may be. The house of God, dedicated to him, is in a peculiar sense a place of prayer, and those Protestant Churches which are now opening their doors to the passer-by on the street with the invitation to "Enter, rest, and pray," are doing a noble service to the weary in body and soul. But we should never suppose for an instant that our prayers are to be offered in such places only. "Everywhere," whether in the field or counting house, whether in the kitchen or the closet, God will hear our prayers.

Paul says further that we should "lift up holy hands, without wrath or doubting." There should be no "praying at" people by repeating their sins and errors in audible prayer. Sometimes this is indulged in and the person who does so imagines that he is praying. God has nowhere encouraged such a thing. The whole

tenor of the Word is against it, and to be guilty of it is an affront to God. Judgment of a Christian's conduct is a matter between himself and God, and the spiritually minded Christian will not intrude into so sacred a matter. Jesus himself said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and any attempt of mine to "straighten out" a brother, by publicly enumerating his faults to God, is a sin against the spirit of love.

We are to pray privately for our sinning brother, of course; but even then the spirit of love must dominate our whole thought and prayer. Unless there is a godly grief and sympathy with him in his sin, we are in danger of merely gossiping about him to God! What an awful thought! And how we should search our hearts as we pray! It is so easy for the devil to deceive us and to lead us astray in the very holiest things. We surely need to pray "always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph. vi. 18.) There can be no doubt that this is just what Paul means here. It is a thing calling for all the love and carefulness possible when we begin to pray for our erring brother. We are to watch carefully that we are praying "in the Spirit" and that love controls all.

We are taught to pray for our enemies; but we dare not pray for them *as enemies*, but as souls for whom Christ died and whom he loves—our brethren! A real pity will possess us for them—a sympathetic pity that they can be so far from what God wants them to be as to hate us! When such a feeling comes into our hearts, then we can “pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

This will be all the more true when we are “praying in the Spirit.” For God has promised us unlimited things when we so pray. John says: “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

God loves to show us his willingness to do unbounded things. One may not know, with certainty, the will of God in a particular instance; but if one will be “praying in the Spirit” concerning that matter, that prayer will be according to the will of God, and will surely prevail.

To pray “in the Spirit” clearly means by the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and when we read this verse in connection with Paul’s teaching in other places there can be no slightest doubt as to its meaning.

Then he suggests what may be proper subjects for our prayers—first of all “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” (1 Tim. ii. 2.) Certainly the condition of the government under which we live has much to do with the peaceable practices of our Christian profession; and such being the case, it is a very proper thing for us to pray for our civil rulers. That country which is cursed with war and revolution, with oppression and misrule, cannot be anything less than a most unhappy place for God’s people, and will lay burdens heavy to be borne upon their hearts.

Jesus evidently meant something when he said, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” We will never know in this life how far the preserving qualities of the Christian religion have affected the peace of the world; nor will we know how much power the prayers of God’s people have in the well-being of the government. It is a dangerous thing for us to neglect the admonition of the apostle here given.

He does not stop with this indication of the subject of prayer, but goes on to emphasize the fact that we may pray and we should pray for *everything*: “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known



unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.)

Here is an inspired recipe against *worry* and the *blues*. No Christian should ever have the blues; and if one realized that worry is a sin, one would not so readily give way to temptation. The promise is that the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds," and the promise is absolutely unfailing when the conditions are met. The conditions are given in the preceding verse: "Be anxious about nothing; but in *everything* pray." When we learn that nothing which concerns our peace and happiness is too *small* to concern God, we will be well on our way to the solution of our worry problems. There is much modern philosophy about the burdens of life which bids us "Keep Smiling," and the like, that is puerile and foolish. An imbecile might keep smiling when fortune is wrecked, health gone, or family trouble darkens the home; but only one who knows the secret of real prayer can have the peace of God in such conditions. When the heart is enjoying tranquillity, the countenance is in repose and the sweetness of that peace shines out in the face.

But the thing that burdens you may not be

88 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

so great as broken health, lost fortune, or family trouble. It may be one of the "little foxes" that is destroying the vine of your joy. The exhortation is to you: "In *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

A homely illustration will help us to see the point more clearly. A man was toiling along the road afoot, with a heavy burden upon his back, when he was overtaken by another who was driving a wagon. The driver halted and invited the burdened man to climb aboard the wagon and ride. With thanks the toiler obeyed, but continued to keep the burden upon his shoulder after being seated. The driver turned to him and said: "Why don't you lay your burden down in the wagon?" "O," said the other, "it is so good of you to carry me, I could not think of asking you to carry my burden too."

We are willing for the Lord to carry us, but think it is too much to trouble him about our burdens. We think God ought not to be approached in prayer about trifles. THERE ARE NO TRIFLES WITH GOD WHEN THE PEACE OF A HUMAN SOUL IS TROUBLED.

Michelangelo was showing a friend through his studio one day and the great painter called attention to some of the minute details of his

work. "O," said the visitor, "those things are mere trifles." "Yes," said the artist with flashing eyes, "but trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle."

Let no one consider anything too unimportant to take to God in prayer.

But now, Paul tells us that our prayers should be earnest and persistent. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers." (Col. iv. 12.)

This example of prayer, cited by Paul, shows the character of praying that prevails. It is prayer in which the petitioner "labors fervently."

Real praying is *work*. It is not mere recital of a list of platitudes; but it is entering into a spiritual warfare and wrestling match. Not that God has to be persuaded against his will to do something for us; but there are evil spirit beings who contest our approach to God, and it is no easy thing to force one's way through such opposers. (Eph. vi. 12.) Let any soul begin earnestly and seriously to pray and he becomes conscious immediately of two things: First, God's Spirit enabling him to pray. There is an unction and an uplift in his soul which he realizes comes from God. Then he is conscious of opposition—hidden, intangible, but real.

Coldness will sweep over him. Deadness of soul will come. He will feel unable to proceed; but if he persevere in the name of Jesus, and in the power of his cross, he will feel the opposition disperse and the joy of real prayer will fill his being; and when he has concluded, there will be a physical exhaustion that will tell the story of real labor in prayer.

The formalist knows nothing of such prayer conflict; but Epaphras was no formalist. He was an interceding priest of God, and everyone who will learn the secret of prayer as Paul teaches it in his epistles will be such a priest of God.

Of course, not every prayer will have such opposition, nor will the one who prays always reach such a point of physical exhaustion in his battle with the unseen forces of the spirit world; but every real prayer will have the consciousness of the hearing ear of God. Sometimes we pray with the blessed sense of help, and the prayer is one of victory all the way through; but let us never be deceived when the enemy opposes, and so led to desist. We are often easily defeated by yielding to the lack of the prayer spirit and the passivity that the enemy thrusts upon us.

Finally, he says that our prayers should be

continuous: "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. v. 17.)

The Christian who really learns the secret of prayer will always be in the spirit of prayer. On Mars' Hill Paul said of God: "In him we live, and move, and have our being." So in the spirit of prayer we live constantly, and it is as easy and natural to glide from conversation with man to conversation with God as it is to include a third human being in our conversation. If this is not true, then we are not "praying always." Sometimes it would be distinctly shocking for Christians to go at once into the presence of God. Any indulgence that would make immediate prayer incongruous is an evil indulgence. Let us pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In this chapter we have seen Paul's relation to the subject of prayer: First, as to his own habits. He was as truly a man of prayer as was our Lord, and, like our Lord, had his greatest experiences at his prayer time. He lived in the atmosphere of prayer so constantly that he breaks out into ejaculatory prayer whenever he is addressing a letter to a Church or an individual. Second, he has a wonderful



92 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

line of teaching on the subject, running through his epistles.

If we will study his writings, we will have a strong buttressing to our prayer life. May the dear Lord lead us into a knowledge of this vital part of our spiritual warfare, and may we come to know something of the battles and of the glorious victories.

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

## VI

### THE PRAYERS OF PAUL

**I**N the last chapter we saw something of the teachings of St. Paul with reference to prayer. In this chapter we propose to examine his practice. The best sort of teaching is by example, and so we want to know *how* he prayed. If we can gather together his recorded prayers and examine them, we shall learn something of the way to prevail in prayer.

Of course we are limited to only a very few of his briefest petitions. No one can read his epistles and not be impressed with the fact that he literally "prayed without ceasing." There is a constant turning to God in the midst of his most argumentative writings, while the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he tells us of our possessions in the heavenlies and of our spiritual warfare, is a veritable manual of prayer. Paul is on his knees all the way through it.

Now, as we have gathered the dozen or so of his prayers, scattered through his epistles, and classified them, they seem to fall into three groups: Thanksgiving, petition, and intercession.

## 94 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

This is wonderfully natural and simple. His prayers of adoration and communion are not for our eyes or ears. We might feel as if we would like to have heard him pray when he was worshipping God—when it concerned his soul alone; but he has not given us that. It is too sacred. There are times when no soul may intrude upon the sanctity of our devotions; and if we undertake to talk about these precious seasons, our lips are dumb. We feel as if it would help us to hear Paul in secret communion with his God; but it is not so. There is a secret place in God for each of us; and no other man, even though he be an apostle, can help us there. The Holy Spirit, and he alone, can lead us to that place.

So our Lord Jesus gives us no prayer of his that reveals that secret of fellowship with the Father.

It is striking, too, that Paul's intercessory prayers are chiefly in the epistles of his later life. As he grew riper in experience his prayers took on a deeper pleading for his disciples to know the hidden things of God and to be complete in all his will. Let us look now at the prayers themselves.

First of all, his prayers of thanksgiving are three in number. He thanks God for a faithful and earnest friend in the person of Timothy,

saying: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee." (2 Tim. i. 3-5.)

The human heart craves fellowship. We are hungry for the companionship of those who are like-minded, and Paul found this companionship in Timothy. Especially did he long for Timothy at this time. He is in prison at Rome. All have forsaken him save Luke (2 Tim. iv.11). He is facing trial before Nero, the most heartless monster who ever sat upon an earthly throne. He is expecting the case to go against him (2 Tim. iv. 6); but he longs to see Timothy once more, and urges him to get there before winter (2 Tim. iv. 21). So the prayer with which the epistle opens is one of thanksgiving for such a faithful and true friend as Timothy.

Then, in another place, he records a prayer of thanksgiving for the fellowship and coöperation of the Philippian Church, saying: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." (Phil. i,

## 96 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

3-5.) There is no sweeter joy to the pastor than the fellowship of the Church in the gospel.

There are six "ships" in the Christian fleet: *Son-ship*, which speaks of our position; for "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) By the new birth we are admitted into the family of God and become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4.) This is an exalted position; and because of it, we are urged to walk worthy of this high calling. The second of these "ships" is *disciple-ship*, which speaks of instruction. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (John viii. 31.) *Steward-ship* speaks of service: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.) *Wor-ship* indicates our attitude: "And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." (Heb. i. 6.) When Jesus was on earth, he received the worship of men and of angels. The word primarily means *worth-ship*, and to worship is to ascribe worth and praise and adoration to the subject of our worship. *Heir-*



*ship* speaks of the prospect before the Christian. We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) And some day we shall reign with him. Finally *fellow-ship* tells of our communion with each other. There is a place where the soul of one Christian blends with that of another and we share each other's joys and burdens. John says: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 3.)

We see Paul rejoicing because of this Christian fellowship. It is a joy to any Christian to know such communion, and the heart hungers for it more than the body hungers for food. This is especially true of the itinerant who has no certain dwelling place. He feels the loneliness of going through life walking apart. When he does find real fellowship, it is as sweet water to a thirsty soul. So Paul's prayer of thanksgiving ascends to God for this fellowship as realized in the Philippian Church. Very dear to him was this first planting in Macedonia. Many times he had gone back in memory to that night in Troas when he saw the vision of the man of Macedonia and all that attended its obedience. So continually he refreshed his

soul with the memory of the response in Philippi and the faithfulness of the Philippian Church.

Next we read a prayer of thanksgiving to God for a faithful Church which has brought forth the fruits of a real Christian life in Thessalonica. (1 Thess. i. 2, 3.) He is made to rejoice when he remembers their threefold mark of discipleship: their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

The wonder grows upon us as we study these prayers of Paul to see how, even in his devotions, he teaches the truth of God. To be sure, all of this is not a prayer, for he refers to his prayer and then goes on with the epistle; but the suggestion of the substance of his petition is quite clear, and, as someone has said, "One can see a large field through a small chink in the fence."

Bearing this in mind, it is quite clear that, as he prays for them, he has this threefold mark of Christian character in mind as exemplified in them, and his heart rejoices as he thinks of it. In 1 Thessalonians i. 9, 10, he mentions the specific manner in which all of this was manifested in them. Notice the beauty of it: "Your work of *faith*—how ye turned to God from idols." Nothing can be a truer mark of faith in a heathen than his turning from his idols. "And labor of love—to serve the

living and true God." This is a real labor and worthy of great reward. "And patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ—and to wait for his Son from heaven." To thus read these two verses is to get Paul's conception of discipleship and to appreciate the things that were in his mind when he was praying.

Now we come to the second group of his prayers, which consist of petitions. These are the things he *asks* for. It is very striking that Paul offers a prayer of forgiveness for those who have mistreated him; and in this he follows the example of his Lord and the great proto-martyr, St. Stephen.

Each of these instances of prayer for persecutors is a marvelous example of grace. When our Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross and dying in agony and shame, he prayed for those who were guilty and for the crowd about the cross. When Stephen was being stoned to death and he saw the gates of glory opened, he prayed for his tormentors. When Paul was on trial before Nero, in a strange city, friendless and alone, and those who could have helped him and whose testimony might have cleared him forsook him to his doom—to meet the fierce beasts in the Roman stadium—he prayed for their forgiveness, thus completing this wonderful trilogy, and emphasizing the truth that the

## 100 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

spirit of Christianity is a spirit of forgiveness and love.

We next have Paul praying for a safe journey to Rome (Rom. i. 10) and to Thessalonica (1 Thess. iii. 10, 11). He was the greatest traveler of ancient times. Back and forth across the Mediterranean he had gone, and his tracks were to be found on every great highway of the empire. It is not improbable that he even reached the shores of Britain in his tireless traveling. In jeopardy he must have been hundreds of times. In 2 Corinthians xi. he recounts some of these struggles. Luke gives us a vivid account of one shipwreck he survived, and here Paul gives us the secret of his safety: *he prayed*. Was there anything about which this great apostle did not pray?

Again we have him praying for the sanctification of the Thessalonians and their entire preservation, body, soul, and spirit, to the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. v. 23). How characteristic of the true pastor and spiritual father to desire the best things for those whom he had led to Christ!

Finally in his petitions we come to the thing that burned upon his heart always: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1). He was a true Israelite. He knew the prophecies

as to Israel's future, and he knew what it would mean if only they would turn to the Lord. Not only was all this true; but he loved his own with a passion seldom equaled, and so, from his conversion to his execution, he longed for them to accept Christ. Everywhere he went he appealed to them. His prayers ascended continually for their salvation.

We should learn from the things for which he prayed how we, in turn, may effectually exercise in prayer.

Having considered now the way Paul prayed in his thanksgiving and in his petitions, let us look at his prayers of intercession. Here we are confronted with a wealth of material. It is chiefly by way of inference, to be sure, but it leads us into some very profitable meditations.

We gather up the suggestions in three outstanding instances of intercessory prayer. To get the best results, these scriptures should be laid side by side and diligently compared. We present them as follows:



## 102 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

### *Colossians i. 9-15.*

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

### *Ephesians i. 15-23.*

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

### *Ephesians iii. 14-21.*

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

For your own study you should follow out carefully the suggestions here called up, using *your own arrangement* of the thought. We select a few things, quite independent of the

commentaries, but in the way of emphasizing the thought before us now.

These three prayers show us the things that Paul, as a devoted spiritual father, desired for his children in the faith. Every true pastor has a passion for his people to progress in spiritual things. There is much in the present-day system that thwarts this. Preachers to-day are too often business managers running more or less successful religious enterprises. The present-day pastor with a large membership, with from two to a dozen assistants and with committees, clubs, luncheons, and what-not to care for, cannot know intimately nor yearn passionately for the spiritual advancement of his people. His denominational and community programs are too pressing for such *real pastoral care*.

Perhaps if Paul had been compelled to speak before the Romany Ramblers Club on Monday, and had been taking the third degree in the Knights of the Mystic Mummeries on Tuesday night, and if he had been a member of the Grievance Committee of the Tent Workers' Union which met on Thursday, while he also had to see to some special matters relating to the relief of the poor Jews of Palestine which the members of the Jewish Protective Association had enterprised, we should never have

had these wonderful prayers. But, fortunately for us, he was shut up in prison and the busy city all around him was able to get along without his activity while he waited on God and wrote down the ever-living truths that burned in his heart while God spoke to him. O, if we could learn the lesson of sinking out of sight for a while in order to commune with God, we would have messages worth hearing when we came forth from the secret Presence! A prison cell and a purified heart have been the birth-place of the best things the world has ever known. Present-day sainthood is too easy and the preaching too popular to be permanent in its values. The man who fits too easily into programs fails to produce results for God. God's heroes have been the non-conformists. This does not mean pig-headedness and unwillingness to coöperate with others; but rather a godly determination to follow the leading of God's Spirit into unfrequented but fruitful fields.

Paul shows here what he yearned for his spiritual children to have. Let us segregate and classify the things in which he prays for them to excel.

We notice first of all that he desires for them to be "filled with all the fullness of God." This, to be sure, is not first in order of his

praying; but it is first in order of importance. If that should be theirs, all else would follow.

The question arises, just here, as to what Paul meant in asking for them to be filled with all the fullness of God. Did he mean that they should be so filled with God as to contain all his attributes? Was Paul asking that they be omniscient or omnipotent? How can the soul of a finite being, such as man is, contain the Infinite One?

Manifestly he could not mean that; but he did mean something. Just what did he mean?

Let us not speculate, but rather turn to the Word itself and see if it throws any light upon this subject. We find the word "fullness," with reference to God, occurring just six times in the Word and five of these times in Paul's writings. Once it occurs in John i. 16 and one of the occurrences in Paul is that which is under examination, so we are left four instances to examine.

It is exceedingly interesting to notice that the use of the term is confined to Ephesians and Colossians and that they balance so wonderfully.

These two Epistles are companion letters. The Epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter to the Pauline Churches, and in the best manuscripts the name of the particular Church



## 106 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

is left blank, so that it could be inserted when intended for a local congregation. It is quite clear that Paul was referring to this letter in Colossians iv. 16, where it is spoken of as the epistle from Laodicea. Beautifully these two epistles teach the truth of the oneness of the body, the Church of Christ. In Ephesians, however, the teaching proceeds with the thought of the body prominently in the foreground, and in Colossians it is with the thought of Christ, the head, more prominent.

Holding this thought in mind then, read carefully these four passages in which the "fullness of God" appears:

Ephesians i. 22, 23 tells us that God "put all things under his feet, and gave him [Christ] to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

In Ephesians iv. 11-13 we are told that God gave certain gifts to the Church for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Now we must pause and examine these



scriptures. They show us that Paul here views the *Church* as the fullness of Christ. The thought, then, is that the Church is the *completion* of the Christ.

This is the significance of that statement in Hebrews: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." He did not need *moral perfecting* as we do; and the suffering was not for discipline, nor did it minister to his character in any particular. His sufferings were wholly vicarious, as the context here shows very clearly. The only sense in which he could be perfected was in the completion of his body—the Church.

So in this Ephesian passage the "full-grown man" is not the fully developed Christian, but is the completed Christ. Paul uses exactly the same figure in 1 Corinthians xii. 12. "So also is Christ" does not mean the human Lord Jesus, nor the glorified Christ, but rather the *Completed man*, Christ the head, and his body the Church, as a careful reading of the text will show.

Now note the translation Weymouth gives of Ephesians i. 22, 23 and the sense is clear: "God has put all things under His feet, and has appointed Him universal and supreme

Head of the Church, which is His Body, the completeness of Him who everywhere fills the universe with Himself."

It seems very clear, then, that Paul's thought of "fullness" (and it is that we are striving to understand) is the *completed* Christ; or to say it another way, it is Christ with his spiritual gifts and graces as manifested in his Church. This is emphasized when we study the two passages in Colossians:

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (i. 19);

"For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (ii. 9).

Calling to mind our statement above that these epistles are complementary, we see how beautifully these scriptures balance. In Ephesians "fullness" is spoken of as being in the Church, while in Colossians it is in Christ. Both statements are true, and both must be read to get the whole truth.

Now observe the next statement that Paul makes in Colossians and the whole teaching is brought to a focus: "And ye are complete in him" (ii. 10). Now it becomes necessary to look at the original in order to see the real significance. The word used in all these passages for "fullness" is "pleroma." In the tenth verse the word for "made complete" is the verb

“*pepleromenoi*,” the stem of which is “*plero-*ma”; so that whatever is meant by “fullness” in the ninth verse is also meant in the tenth.

Turning back to Colossians i. 27 and noting only the last clause (the paragraph from verse 24 is all summed up in this one phrase), “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” the whole meaning of Paul’s prayer in Ephesians iii. 19 becomes clear.

Paul is desiring for his spiritual children that they yield themselves to the indwelling Christ so that they may be completely filled with him—that they may be filled with him who is himself “all the fullness of God.” He yearns for them to have that fullness which, as his own use of the word indicates, is the completeness of those graces and gifts that minister to the edifying of the Church. In this sense it is entirely possible for one to be “filled with all the fullness of God,” and it is quite clear that it is a most important thing. If one be so filled, the other things for which he prays will be possible to him.

As we take up Paul’s own prayers and study them, we are shown what really constitute proper subjects of prayer for a mature Christian. He does not give a very large place to petition for himself, but he does give much time and place to intercession for others. As we

## 110 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

grow in grace and are more filled with the fullness of God, we approach in our own service the character of work our Lord does. The one thing he does now, as it was the chief thing he did on earth, is to intercede. So it was with Paul. He gave himself to intercession. This is especially true in his later and riper years.

It will afford a proper matter for meditation to continue a study of these intercessory prayers of Paul; but it would lead us too far afield to do so at this time. Our purpose is achieved if we have shown something of what it means to pray in an intercessory manner for others. Too many Christians have a vague idea of what praying means. After a lecture on prayer a young woman asked: "What can I find to pray about for an hour? I can ask for everything I can think of in a very few minutes, and the rest of the time is wasted or it drags."

The trouble is that our knowledge of what constitutes prayer is so limited. We see here that Paul prayed for his converts to excel in many things. Studying these prayers then and trying in some manner to emulate them will give us large material for our prayer time.

## VII

### THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

**T**HE only way adequately to study prayer is to study the prayers of great souls. There are numbers of volumes of such prayers. But we are going to pass over all others and come directly to the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, if he needed to pray, we need to cry out and never cease. No wonder Paul said, "Pray without ceasing."

There are eight prayers of our Lord's recorded in the New Testament:

1. The prayer of thanksgiving recorded in Matthew xi. 25-30 and Luke x. 21, 22.
2. The prayer at the raising of Lazarus, John xi. 41, 42.
3. The prayer for strength, John xii. 27, 28.
4. The prayer for his disciples, John xvii. 1-26.
5. The prayer of submission, Matthew xxvi. 39.
6. The prayer for his enemies, Luke xxiii. 34.
7. The prayer commending his spirit to God, Luke xxiii. 46.
8. The Lord's Prayer, Luke xi. 2-4.



## 112 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

The time to study each of these prayers is not ours at present, so we shall have to look very briefly at all of them as a whole, studying the last named a little more carefully. Every one of these eight prayers was offered at a time of crisis. Somehow our Lord's brief earthly career abounded in crises. His was no placid, smooth career; but his teaching provoked opposition and created situations out of which he must be delivered by prayer.

The shortest of these prayers is the one uttered upon the cross for his enemies: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

This prayer colors all the teaching and life of Christianity. It was a new thing in the earth. Men had prayed for God to *destroy* their enemies. Now comes the Saviour of men, and he prays for God to *forgive* his enemies. By so much is Christianity higher than Judaism.

The longest of his prayers is that recorded in John xvii., where he is praying for his disciples. It is a marvelous prayer and shows the things that he desires for us. These things are four in number:

1. That we might be kept.
2. That we might be sanctified.
3. That we might be unified.
4. That we might be glorified.

This is a marvelous prayer of intercession.

Study it and let the spirit of it sink down into your hearts.

But we come now to the famous "Lord's Prayer," which is better known than any other literary composition on earth, not even excepting the twenty-third Psalm. Repeated ten thousand times every Sunday, it has a place in the heart of the race second only to him who gave it. No one can hope to know how to pray who has never studied this prayer. Notice the circumstances under which it was given: "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray."

The sight of a saint upon his knees in prayer to God is a sermon that one never forgets. It is in itself a dynamic thing.

These disciples recognized a power in the life of their Lord and Master that came through prayer, and they longed to know the secret of such power. We all long to know the secret of power. We attend institutes, we sit in conventions, we do all sorts of things in order that we may learn the secret of power to accomplish. The world is hungry for power. The Church is longing to know the secret. All sorts of plans are laid to do the work of the Lord.

We are going to say a thing right here that will be little realized. Few will be willing to

## 114 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

accept it; but it is true. *Prayer is the most dynamic force in all God's universe.*

These disciples learned wonderful lessons of prayer; but here is where they got their start: "Lord, teach us to pray."

So glad was our Lord to do this that he did not hesitate a moment. This request of theirs was granted at once. He answered by giving them first a form of prayer and then two parables to illustrate the application of the form. (Luke xi. 1-13.)

The first of these parables, that of the man going to his friend for bread, and not accepting a refusal, teaches *persistence* in prayer, and the other, of the father giving exactly what the child asks for and not a substitute, teaches *definiteness* in prayer. Both of these stories are an integral part of his answer to their petition, "Lord, teach us to pray." If we are to know the answer to the "how" that was in their minds, if not in their spoken words, we must study the entire section.

Notice in the form of the prayer two important things: First, the One to Whom we pray—*Our Father*; second, the one who offers the petition.

Men had not known God as a *Father*. He was the great and terrible God, so holy and awful in his majesty that when he came down on

the top of the mountain to talk with Moses, the whole mountain was covered with a smoke; and if so much as a beast touched it, it should be thrust through with a dart. In fact, the word "Father," with reference to God, is used only four times in the Old Testament—three times in Isaiah and once in Jeremiah—and all of these are prophetic uses, looking to the New Testament times. Everything that the best father you know can possibly mean, and *infinitely more*, God is to us.

Love is the first thing we think of in connection with a proper human father. No one but a father knows the depth of a father's love. This love is expressed in self-sacrificing toil, in willingness to surrender everything in order that his children may be comfortable and happy. So our God loves us with an everlasting love. His heart goes out to us at all times.

Then notice how Jesus teaches us to call him "*Our Father*." Here we not only have the Fatherhood of God, but the brotherhood of man in its true sense. The fact that we are to call him *Our Father* indicates that he has a family, and we recognize the same right to call him Father that others besides ourselves have.

Prayer is a broadening life. As we pray we grow and take in others whom we long to see

saved. To pray "Our Father" is to include in our sense of family relation all races of men; for "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Jesus would teach us not to draw a circle around about ourselves in our thinking and be selfish and narrow.

Now let us notice the one who prays, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." That is to say that if prayer is to be heard it must proceed from one who has a *forgiving heart*. The Psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Unforgiveness constitutes one of the most common reasons for unanswered prayer. If we go to God for a blessing upon ourselves when there is some one of God's children whom we hate, we lock up the storehouse of heaven by our utter disregard of the spirit of love.

In another place Jesus said, "When ye stand praying, forgive," and he assures us that if we do not forgive men their trespasses neither will God forgive us. (Matt. vi. 15.) To be sure, this is in the "Sermon on the Mount" and dispensationally belongs to another age; but the germ of truth included there applies universally as to time as well as to principle. Unforgiveness is as deadly in this dispensation as in any other.



Then, how wonderfully Jesus himself exemplified this teaching when he hung upon the cross as a result of the hatred and the injustice of the crowd who surged about its foot and who railed at him and mocked him in the hour of his extremity when He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

In his "Life of Christ" Papini says: "We ought to respond with love to that hatred, with gentleness to that harshness as reparation for the suffering of which we are often the real cause, immediate or distant. Our enemy is also our savior. We ought every day to be grateful to our enemies; they alone see clearly and state openly what is ignoble in us. . . . For this service we owe them love. For our enemy needs love, and needs our love. . . . He who hates is unhappy; hates because he is unhappy. His hatred is the bitter outlet of his suffering. . . . We will know him better if we love him. . . . If we love our enemy, his soul will be transparent to us, and as we penetrate farther into it we will discover much more to call forth our pity and love."

How ignoble then for us to stand "upon our rights" and refuse to forgive our enemies! Such an attitude makes prayer impossible. When we approach God in prayer, we must first of all search our own hearts, and if we

find unlove harbored there, we must at once get rid of that ere we can pray effectually.

Another primary essential in our coming to God in prayer is that we take time to realize and become conscious of the presence of God. Until this has happened, our prayer will be unable to proceed. We must still our hearts and realize that *now I am in the presence of God. Who is God?* The Great Creator of the universe—the King of kings and Lord of lords—the Eternal One. So, solemnizing our hearts, think of Him as *Our Father*—loving, tender, forgiving, kind; ready to hear and ready to answer.

Now examine the heart. Do I hate any soul? Has one wronged me? Then I freely forgive him, for in the conscious presence of such a God I dare not hold iniquity in my heart.

Having taken time to *realize* all this, until it actually becomes a part of our consciousness, we are now ready to pray.

“Hallowed be thy name!” Adoration of our God is natural when we have realized his nature and his presence. We pour out our souls in worship of him.

Do we realize how little we actually *worship* God? We talk about him sometimes; but do we ever bow down and adore him? The “Mystics,” as we call them, used to do that.

The cloistered saints of the Middle Ages did it, but we have swung to the opposite extreme. Not only do we not go into cells and live apart; we do not even take a little time to go aside and worship our God! O, may he help us to learn what that means! It is a very vital part of our prayers. It opens the way for our petitions. Until we have worshiped him, we ought to be ashamed to ask baldly for help. If we go to an earthly friend for help, we do not prefer our request until first we have visited for a while. How impolite to walk right in, say, "I want a thing. Give it to me, please," and then walk right out again. We do not treat anyone but God that way. Let us learn to "visit" with God; for prayer is communion. It is not just "broadcasting" a list of needs into the empty air; but it is talking with One who talks back to us. Prayer is a fellowship. There is One who responds to us. Jesus implied all of that in the prayer. When we worship him, we become conscious of the things that are upon his heart and we voice back the prayer of his own soul. Prayer is a circle and a half. It originates in heaven, swings down through our hearts, and then back to God, whence it falls again on us in blessing. When we are in communion with him, there comes the desire to pray for certain things; and these are the things he will quickly

## 120 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

give us, for they originate in his purpose of love for us. Hence the next petition in this model prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth."

This is the heart cry of God, not because it is of selfish advantage to him, but because it is the richest blessing that the world will ever know. Thank God that, in spite of the seeming triumph of evil and the slow progress of the truth, the earth is to be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. The day is just ahead of us when, right here in this world of wickedness and sin, the will of God is going to triumph and become supreme—when all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ; when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." We are taught to pray for this glorious consummation. It is God's plan and purpose to bring it about. O may he hasten that day!

Having now become conscious of his presence, having freed one's self of iniquity, and having worshiped him and then entered into his heart passion for the world, we approach our own needs. "Give us day by day our daily bread"—all our needs supply. How simple a thing it seems for him to do! What faith we have for it when we have swept the range of eternity with

him in prayer. No doubt; no fear; superb trust! How precious it is! But he would not exclude our prayer for these things. Anything that is of concern to us is important with him. Do not listen to the critic who would wreck your faith in prayer by saying that God is too busy with the big things to listen to your petitions, that He knows your need and sends its supply anyhow. Well, he said that we should ask about the little temporalities, and he promises to hear us about them. I am so glad that he who sowed the stars in the great field of blue above us, as the husbandman sows the grain, has concern for even a sparrow, and not one of them falleth to earth without him. No, no! Don't be afraid to take anything to him in prayer. He will hear you.

"O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!"

He tells us to pray for forgiveness and that we be kept from temptation. We never get in this life where we do not need to ask for forgiveness. The closer we get to God, the more we realize that we are constantly failing of the highest things and are constantly in need of this prayer. This is no excuse for constantly sinning, either. If we are constantly doing



what we know to be wrong, we may well ask if we are Christians at all. The Christian does not habitually sin. But even so, we fail. We lose the victory now and again and we need to pray for forgiveness.

Then how we do need to cry out for deliverance from the evil one! Peter tells us that "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The devil isn't dead, and he isn't chained; but he is on our track. Thank God, if we keep in the center of God's will for us, he can never overcome us. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

But now, having looked at the various petitions we are taught to offer, let us see how we are to offer them. We shall take the last of the two parables first.

Here is a father whose son asks for bread, and that father gives not a stone, but bread. Again, he asks for a fish, and the father gives him a fish, not a serpent. Now the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. In other words, the petition must be definite and the answer will likewise be definite.

Dr. Torrey told of being invited to an Eastern college to speak on prayer. The president came to his room to see him after his arrival and said: "Dr. Torrey, I hope you will not tell

these young men that they can pray for special things and *get just what they pray for.*" Dr. Torrey replied: "That is exactly what I have come here to tell them they *can* do."

We are sometimes cheated out of a great deal of blessing by the teaching that God will not give us what we pray for, that he will substitute something else.

There are times, when our prayers are not well ordered, that this may be true; and it is true often with non-praying petitioners. There are those who do not wait on God sufficiently to know His will, and who therefore offer selfish petitions. But there is a blessed truth taught here that we may ask for a specific thing and get just that. Jesus meant for these disciples to know this.

The other parable he gives is that of the householder whose journeying friend came to him when he was unprepared, but he went to a neighbor and knocked on the door so persistently that the neighbor arose and gave him what he needed. The lesson here is *persistence*. Too many times we surrender easily to the delayed answer and give up. The Lord tests our earnestness and faith now and again, and if we persevere in our asking he will give us all our desire.

Daniel prayed and immediately God sent

## 124 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

an angel to answer; but the angel was resisted by the forces of evil and was delayed three weeks; however, when he broke through and reached Daniel, the man of God was still there in prayer.

We are often like naughty boys who ring doorbells and run. We offer a little prayer and then are gone before an answer can reach us. God has given us instances as well as parables to show us that he loves to have us persistent. Abraham praying for Sodom persisted, and God answered every petition down to that for Sodom to be spared for the sake of ten righteous persons. If Abraham had asked again, it seems reasonable to believe that God would have granted his request.

If a thing is worth having, it is worth asking for with a persistence that will not be denied. That is just what the householder did. He was ordered from the door; but he refused to go until he had the loaves.

Now God is not unwilling to bless us; but sometimes we are not ready to be blessed and we require the discipline of waiting. How important that we set ourselves to the task of praying and refuse to be denied! Lord, teach us to pray and give us a heart to pray! We can never be effective as Christians until we have learned this secret.

God means for every one of us to be victorious in our own lives. We cannot be until we learn to pray. We will be constantly defeated until we learn how to wait on him. God means for every one of us to be a soul winner; but we can never be such until we learn to pray. Victories for God in our own lives and trophies for him in the lives of others are won on our knees. Lord, help us to pray!

## VIII

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER

THE Holy Spirit has always been the executive of the Godhead, just as Christ has always been the manifestation of the Godhead. He is mentioned eighty-eight times in the Old Testament, and in every case it is either as the direct power of God acting on nature to create, or as coming upon some saint to empower him for service. His first mention is in Genesis i. 2: "And the earth was without form, and void. And the Spirit of God moved [brooded] upon the face of the waters." Here he is seen as the creating power of God.

This is the key verse to all the activities of the Holy Spirit in the entire word. Wherever he appears he is *creating*. He gives power to the individual saint and to the Church, creating through them conditions and possibilities which did not exist before.

The last reference but one in the Old Testament speaks of his being the "spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zech. xii. 10); and it is of this important characteristic that we wish to speak at this time.



We remember that the present age is in a peculiar way the age of the Spirit. He is mentioned in the New Testament 276 times as against the 88 times of the Old Testament, and Jesus told the disciples two startling things concerning his work in this dispensation. One of these was that he was to be *in* them. "He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you." (John xiv. 17.) They had never heard of such a thing. He had always come *upon* the saints of the former age to empower them for service; but to enter *into* them was a new thing, and it was the occasion of comfort to them.

The other thing Jesus said that was in the nature of a surprise to them was that he would *abide* with them forever. Hitherto he had come upon the saint for a special service, and when that service was finished he had left. Now he is promised to abide with the people of God forever.

There are many other things said of the Spirit's coming and work, but these two are sufficient for our purpose at the present time. We know from this word that the Holy Spirit is in his people and that he is abiding there. In a very real sense it may be said, then, that he is *incarnate* in the Church as Christ was incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This must not be pressed too far; but there is a

## 128 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

reality in it. He is incarnate in the Church as it is the body of Christ; and he is dwelling in the body of the believer. Our bodies are the "temples of the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

That being true, the Holy Spirit is ready to do the work of God *in* us and *through* us. He is the Spirit of creation, and he will empower us to do the work of God. We have already seen that the *creative power* is prayer. In our prayer life we enter into coöperation with God in his mighty creative power. This is only possible as we are filled with the Spirit (Eph. v. 18) and as we pray in the Spirit (Eph. vi. 18).

As we look into the word we are impressed with the truth that intercession is a threefold act. In order to be perfect and to accomplish effectually the purpose of God it must be so.

The present work of our Lord in heaven is a work of intercession. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

Victory over sin is possible to us because of his work on Calvary and his intercession. He began that high priestly work while he was yet upon the earth. He reveals this in his conversation with Peter as recorded in Luke xxii. 31, 32: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to

have you, that he may sift you as wheat: *but I have prayed for thee*, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This was a transaction which told before the time of his peculiarly intercessory work what that work was to be, as did also his prayer for all the disciples on the night before his crucifixion. This is what he is doing now in the glory. Satan is always desiring to have us that he may sift us; but the wonder of it all is that our Lord is ever praying that our faith fail not! What a joy to us to know that, though temptation may come, we do not meet it alone. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, but one who was tempted in all points like as we are, and who is able therefore to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. iv. 15, ii. 18.)

In a very real sense Jesus finished the work he was given to do (John xvii. 4, xix. 30)—namely, to make atonement for our sins, to "finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. ix. 24); but there is also a very real sense in which he "*began* to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1), and is continuing, not only through the Church, but in his own person, "to do" even until this day. He is our great High Priest; and just as really as the work of the

130 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

earthly high priest was to intercede for the people, so our Great High Priest intercedes for us. Wesley sings:

“Arise, my soul, arise;  
Shake off thy guilty fears;  
The bleeding Sacrifice  
In my behalf appears:  
Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on his hands.

“He ever lives above,  
For me to intercede;  
His all-redeeming love,  
His precious blood, to plead;  
His blood atoned for all our race,  
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.”

It is exactly this that Hebrews tells us of Christ: “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he ap-

peared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 23-28.)

Here is set forth His three appearings: "Once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Nothing can be stated more clearly than that. In the second case he is contrasted with the high priest who went once every year into the holy place to intercede for the people. Our Great High Priest has gone *once* into heaven itself to intercede for us. Again he will appear without sin, or apart from sin, as the Revised Version puts it, unto salvation.

At the present time he is in the "holy of holies," even heaven itself, and his work is that of intercession.

But he shares a part of his intercessory work, at least, with the blessed Holy Spirit, for we read: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. viii. 26, 27.)



## 132 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

Thus we have it clearly taught in the Word that there are two great divine Intercessors: our Lord Jesus Christ in glory—for “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. viii. 34)—and the blessed Holy Spirit *upon the earth* (his activities having been confined to the earth since Pentecost).

Now the third party to the work of intercession is the Church. This becomes true because the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church, and he must find expression through the Church. So Paul exhorts the Church to make “supplications, prayers, *intercessions*, and giving of thanks.” (1 Tim. ii. 1.)

Our attention is called to a very serious thing—namely, *Limiting the power of God*. It was a great sin in Israel’s day (Ps. lxxviii. 41), and it is no less a sin in our day.

When the Holy Spirit is seeking to make intercession for us, he draws us to pray. If we yield to his leadings and go aside, then he pours upon us a spirit of prayer. If, again, we yield to his gentle ministrations, he moves us to an intercessory prayer that, sometimes, surprises us because of its earnestness and intensity. Such prayer is Spirit-born and will mightily prevail with God.

"I cannot tell why there should come to me  
A thought of some one miles and years away,  
In swift insistence on the memory,  
Unless there is a need that I should pray.  
We are too busy to spare thought  
For days together of some friend away;  
Perhaps God does it for us and we ought  
To read his signal as a sign to pray.  
Perhaps just then my friend has fiercest fight,  
A more appalling weakness, a decay  
Of courage, darkness, some lost sense of right,  
And so, in case he needs my prayer, I pray."

But how often is the Spirit grieved and hindered by our failure to obey his leadings! It would amaze and utterly shame us if we could know how often the plans of God to bless us are utterly frustrated by our unwillingness to coöperate in prayer. Such a failure is a cause of displeasure and of wonder to God: "Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment [R. V., justice]. And he saw that there was no man, and *wondered* that there was no intercessor." (Isa. lix. 15, 16.)

Prayer is not a "religious exercise" that may be performed as a rite. To be sure, there is much praying of that sort; but it gets no results. To be effective prayer must be prompted by the Spirit of God and warmed by a fervent spirit on the part of the one praying, and such

### 134 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

prayer is effective. Weymouth translates that passage in James v. 16, "The *heartfelt* supplication of a righteous man exerts a mighty influence," and in a footnote calls attention to the word translated "heartfelt," showing that it may mean "inwardly prompted" by the Holy Spirit. That this is what it does mean is absolutely certain from the context, for the reference is to the great drought and its breaking which occurred in the time of King Ahab. The story is recorded in 1 Kings xviii. Beginning at the forty-first verse of that chapter we read: "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain."

There is no more marvelous answer to prayer than this in the entire Word, and James is inspired to refer to it for our instruction. But the secret of it is to be found in the first verse of the chapter: "And it came to pass. . . . that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and *I will send a rain upon the earth.*"

Elijah's prayer was "heartfelt" in that it was prompted by the Spirit, and he never had any uncertainty as to its outcome; and the reason he had no uncertainty was *because he was a man of faith and obedience*. God could speak to him and he would obey. Then he did not doubt when, after going six times, the servant still saw nothing. Nor did he doubt when at the seventh the cloud was no bigger than a man's hand. Elijah knew God, and he knew God would fulfill his word.

The fact that many Christians do not know anything of such experiences proves nothing more than that they have never learned the secret of prayer. Every truly praying believer knows the meaning of a Spirit-born prayer.

When I was just beginning Christian work I witnessed a most remarkable case of such prayer. There was a young man whom I had known from his earliest childhood, who had never gone to school a day in his life and who

was quite illiterate. He had been very dissolute in his habits, and at the age of eighteen was a drunkard and a libertine. He was even worse than that; he was a procurer and his associates were of the lowest and vilest. He had never attended Sunday school nor church, and knew nothing of the Word. It is impossible to overstate the destitution of his mind.

We were having an evangelistic meeting in a mission founded by my mother. This lad had an appointment with some of the vile people with whom he associated to meet them in the vicinity of the mission. He arrived before his party and waited around for them quite a little while. The night was cold and he sought a place to escape the chilling wind. The mission offered the best place and he came in, seating himself on the rearmost seat. He had been there only a few minutes when God smote him with conviction. So soon as an invitation to come forward was given, he rushed to the front, crying aloud, fell upon his knees, and burst out in loud prayer for his salvation. For over three-quarters of an hour he prayed with such pleadings as I have never heard equaled. In ordinary conversation his speech was ungrammatical, full of colloquialisms and slang; but now it was as chaste and correct English as I have ever heard. He quoted,



correctly, scriptures of which he ordinarily knew not one word. Altogether it was a most remarkable evidence of the speaking of the Spirit. Of course he was marvelously converted to God and transformed in his life. It was a case of Spirit-born prayer, and God wonderfully answered.

The Holy Spirit intercedes through us; and if we are faithful and obedient, we become in a very precious sense "coworkers" with God. Perhaps to-day God is wanting to hear prayer for a missionary who is having a hard time, and the Spirit urges us to our closet that through us he may intercede for that one, even as Christ is interceding in glory, that so the blessed trinity of intercession might be complete. If we yield to his persuasion, what a rich experience is ours! And what blessing God can give to that other one! But if we fail—if we are "out of touch"—what loss is there to us, and how God's purposes in the behalf of the other one are hindered!

"Only a word, yes, only a word,  
That the Spirit's small voice whispered, 'Speak';  
But the worker passed onward unblessed and weak  
Whom you were meant to have stirred  
To courage, devotion, and love anew,  
Because when the message came to you  
You were 'out of touch' with your Lord."

It may not be easy to explain the "why" of all this; but that it is absolutely true, the word of God and Christian experience demonstrate beyond cavil. Of course the self-sufficient and worldly-minded Christian will pass it by with derision; but the spiritual-minded will heed.

God *could* save men directly with no human touch; but he has chosen to take us into blessed fellowship with him in that work. So when he strikes down a Saul of Tarsus he will not tell him what he is to do, but sends an Ananias to lay his hands on him and pray for him. There is not a single instance recorded in the Book where he directly dealt with a seeking soul, but ever sent a Spirit-filled human agent.

There is a sort of holy deference on the part of the persons of the Godhead, and each recognizes the other and will not intrude upon his work. Since this is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit and he is dwelling in the Church, empowering it for soul-winning, God waits on him in this work.

But he also empowers the Church for intercession, and here, again, God waits for him to move us to pray; and as we yield to his leadings in this matter, we are powerful in prayer, God delighting to answer that pleading which is Spirit-born.

Let us not intrude our reason or wisdom on the plan of God; but rather let us coöperate.

Before every great movement of God in the world he has chosen intercessors who made prayer their business until the thing was done.

Jeremiah foretold the return of Israel after seventy years' captivity; but God led Daniel to become the great intercessor for Israel in this case, and he mightily prevailed with God in prayer until it was accomplished.

All the prophets had foretold the coming of Messiah; but Zacharias and Simeon and Anna with others were his "remembrancers."

So with the great movements in later Church history, we would find, if we could know all the facts, that in every case there was a movement of the Spirit to call out intercessors.

Scotland was shaken by the power of God during the Reformation; but long before it struck Scotland God had been pouring the spirit of intercession upon John Knox. No mere human will to pray could beget such passionate pleadings as he poured out in his agonizings before God.

John Wesley's great work was preceded by great praying on the part of his godly mother.

The great revival in Wales in the beginning of this century was preceded by many nights of prayer on the part of Evan Roberts.

It would be idle speculation to surmise what God might have done in any one of these cases

if the intercessor had failed. Israel *might* have been delivered if Daniel had not prayed. Scotland or Wales *might* have been revived; but they *were not* apart from the work of the intercessor.

Just as truly as God waits for a human instrument to bring a soul to Christ, just so truly he awaits the work of the intercessor. How this ought to solemnize our hearts!

So God moves to call out those who will pray, and then leads them to pray for the things he will give and the blessed circle is complete. Blessing always follows such heaven-born praying.

Paul was most earnest in his exhortation to the Ephesians that they "pray in the Spirit." Let us learn the lesson of such prevailing prayer and our lives will be richer and our service will be more effective than we have ever known.

## IX

### THE CROSS AND PRAYER

WE have seen in the chapter on "Unanswered Prayer" some of the hindrances to victorious praying. It is not enough for us to know the disease: we must also know the remedy. To be told that selfishness in prayer makes for defeat is discouraging, unless I am told how to get rid of that spirit of selfishness which vitiates my prayer.

To be told that praying "in His name" gives value to my prayer makes me want to know more perfectly how I can pray "in His name." It is here that the truth of the cross of Calvary will help very materially.

The cross is the moral center of the universe. An eternity before it knew no other future. An eternity to come will know no other past. Well may we sing:

"In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime."

There is a threefold sense in which the cross gives value to our praying. First, it defeats



Satan. Second, it purchases salvation and all the attendant blessings for us. Third, it deals death to self.

We have learned that there is opposition to our praying on the part of Satan and the evil spirits under his control. Nothing is more clearly set forth in the word than this. Paul makes this very emphatic in his Epistle to the Ephesians (vi. 12). But the devil is a *defeated* foe; and when we claim the victory in the name of Jesus and on the ground of Calvary, he must yield to us. We often hear the phrase "the tragedy of Calvary." There was no tragedy there for Jesus, nor for us. Gethsemane was tragedy. Calvary was victory. In Genesis God had told Satan that the Seed of the woman should bruise his head. This bruising took place on Calvary. God said that Satan should bruise the *heel* of the Seed while the Seed would bruise his *head*. On Calvary Satan succeeded in bruising his heel; but he, in turn, bruised Satan's head, hence Calvary was victory for Christ. To recognize this when we are praying adds tremendously to our power in prayer. Many times when we come to God for a thing, or to plead with him for others in intercession, or to hold communion with him, we find the way blocked by some intangible but very real thing that seems to shut off the spirit of prayer

and would drive us away in discouragement and defeat. To be able to recognize the presence of Satan in that thing, and to be able to drive him away on the ground of the victory of Calvary, marks the line between defeat and victory.

A most interesting instance of this occurred in the life of our Lord, and illustrates the way in which Satan uses *even good people* to carry out his purposes. In the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, beginning at the thirteenth verse, we have the record of Jesus's asking the disciples for an expression of their faith. Peter immediately gives voice to the first great confession of faith. Jesus pronounces a blessing upon him and then proceeds to lay down the terms of discipleship. In order to get the setting as it really occurred, one must read Luke ix. 18-22. There we are told that it was while Jesus was alone *praying* that the disciples came to him and the incidents given in Matthew occurred. When Jesus began to give the terms of discipleship, Peter immediately spoke up, saying, "Pity thyself, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." (The Greek word "hileos" means "soothed, appeased," hence the translation I have given.) Immediately Jesus recognized the voice of the enemy, though he was speaking through Peter, and he turned and rebuked him,

#### 144 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The devil ever tried to keep Christ from the cross, and he tries to keep you and me from it too. Every appeal to self-pity comes from him. It is one of the subtlest of all forms of temptation and scores of Christian people fall before it. It always proceeds from Satan, and there is deliverance from it when we appeal to the Lord Jesus on the ground of the cross.

Another interesting case of the opposition of the enemy to the prayers of God's people is told in Acts xvi. 16-18. Paul and a number of other believers were daily interrupted when they went to prayer by the crying out of a young woman who was possessed of an evil spirit. So offensive did this become that Paul had to rebuke the spirit and bring about the deliverance of the afflicted girl. The devil uses all kinds of methods to hinder real praying. He will appeal to self-pity if we are in a hard place—a place of cross-bearing. He will call attention to our virtues, if by the appeal to spiritual pride he can turn us aside from being occupied with our Lord. His effort in the case before us was to gratify the self in Paul and Silas. "These men are the servants of the Most High God." That was perfectly true, but it was out of place and out of harmony with the will of God and the modesty becoming true saints for it to be her-

alded at this time. There is a subtle danger in as proper a thing as *advertising* our Churches that we may offend the Spirit of God by a loud boast of the things we are accomplishing. To appreciate the messenger of God who brings the message is perfectly right and proper. In fact we are bidden in the Word to do so (Heb. xiii. 7, 17); but it should be in a spiritual manner and not as the world honors its people. Paul was unwilling to receive testimony from Satan. It would make for power in our lives if we were more careful in such things.

On the cross Jesus purchased complete victory for us over all the power of the enemy (Luke x. 19); and when we are hindered by him in our praying, no matter what form the hindrance may take, if we will plead the name of Jesus and the power of Calvary we shall find deliverance.

In the second place, the cross is of value in our prayer life, because on it Jesus purchased our salvation. Until we come to Calvary in true penitence and faith, we are not children of God at all, and so are not in a position to pray. The blind man whom Jesus healed (John ix. 31) said: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." There is a very profound truth here. There is a sense in

## 146 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

which God does hear and help the man who does not recognize his Lordship. The unsaved railroad man of whom we spoke in the first chapter is an illustration of this. All crying out in the time of great stress by those who do not really know God, and yet are heard in their straits, proves this. "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses." (Ps. cvii. 17-19.) Still the healed man was right in his statement. God will not hear sinners in their efforts to hold communion with him, or in the higher forms of prayer that intercession knows. These higher forms of prayer can only be possible to one who has been accepted of God and is no longer a stranger, but is a son. Therefore the cross is the ground of real praying. There Jesus purchased redemption for us. We are saved through his blood. Beautiful as his life was and significant as it was in setting us an example, it is his death that saves. The very beginning of all prayer life, therefore, must be at the cross.

If we are in the midst of temptation and are seeking to know the way out, we may find it in the cross. "Who is he that condemneth? It



is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 34-37.) It is perfectly clear that the ability to overcome has been purchased by Christ. In this scripture the resurrection and the intercessory work are coupled up with the crucifixion. That is characteristic of the teaching all the way through the New Testament. The risen life of our Lord has power because of Calvary. In this connection, Paul coins a word, or rather adapts a word that is nowhere else used in the New Testament, I believe. It is more than a superlative. It might be translated, "over-over-comers." We not only succeed in coming over the difficulty, but we are over with room to spare. Paul refers to this again in Corinthians x. 13, where he says: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." All victory over

temptation is ours because Jesus died on the cross.

Perhaps the most important as well as the most potent thing the cross does for the Christian is bringing him victory over self. We long to pray unselfish prayers—prayers that will reach the ear of God and bring results in our lives. We see that selfish asking is “asking amiss,” that it will not prevail. We long to know the secret of deliverance from this selfish thing that hinders prayer, even as it hinders victorious living. That deliverance is in the cross of Christ. Paul says: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. vi. 14.) Again: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. vi. 6.) In these two scriptures we see that the cross deals a threefold death: to self, to sin, and to the world. If we are to know real victory in praying, we shall learn this valuable lesson.

Self is the most deceptive and altogether hindering thing that we have to fight in our Christian lives. It has scores of forms. Self-love, self-pity, self-praise, self-esteem, self-will—just take the dictionary and look them up. Every

one of them is a hindrance to true living and real praying. Until we have learned to "reckon" ourselves dead to these things and to keep them in the place of death, we shall never prevail with God. Self puts on religious airs and would deceive us that way when we have learned something of its acting in other forms. But *religious* self is just as wicked as *irreligious* self. Much Christian work is done in the energy of the flesh and for the gratification of self. God blesses what he can of it, but it is so faulty that he cannot use much of it. Until we learn how to keep the self in the place of death, we shall not be able to win great victories for God.

Some years ago a woman who was wonderfully consecrated to God had a beautiful and loving daughter. The mother had given herself unreservedly to the training and rearing of this daughter and the girl had responded in a remarkable way. She was now in the first blush of womanhood and the companionship of the two was pleasant to see. They were more like chums than like mother and daughter. One day the young woman was taken ill. The mother was untiring in her devotion and most earnest in her praying that God would heal her loved one. But in it all she was yielding to the will of the Lord. Her consecration was so complete that she was able continually to say, "Thy

will be done." It did not seem best to God to spare this daughter, but he called her home to himself. Friends expected to see the mother prostrated with grief when they came to comfort her, but they were surprised to find her quietly kept by the power of God. What was her secret? She knew the power of the cross in the death of self. Self-will was crucified; and while she longed for the companionship of her darling, she longed more for God to have his way in her life. Like Job she could say: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job xxiii. 10.)

One can only know real victory in praying as one knows real victory over self, and one can only know that sort of victory at the cross. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) When we pray, the self will thrust itself in. It wants its own way. God cannot grant his blessings to one so praying. In fact, it is possible for the self to so get in the way that God is greatly hindered in giving us the thing that it is his purpose to give us.

This is evidenced in the case of Jacob. We have heard much of his wrestling with God. He is often held up as an example of persistence

in prayer. The very opposite is true. Jacob did not wrestle with God so much as God wrestled with Jacob. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." (Gen. xxxii. 24.) God wanted to bless him and he was so self-willed that God had to wrestle with him all night, and then cripple him at the last before he could bless him. There are far too many wrestling Jacobs. If we could know the facts in the case of many of the people God has used, we would be surprised to learn how difficult it has been to get them where he could use them; and sadder yet, if we could know how many have utterly failed God when he was so anxious to use them, it would humble us very much and make us search our hearts to find the self-will there is in us, hindering God's plan. "Any bit of selfishness allowed in the life is an open door to the enemy."

Abraham failed God and went down into Egypt, where he suffered many things and where there was no altar to mark his sojourn. Moses failed God and was not permitted to enter Canaan. David failed God at a most crucial point and sorrow entered his heart like a knife thrust. Peter failed, although he had vowed his determination to be loyal though all others might fail. Our failure along this very line



ought to bow our heads in shame and sorrow forever.

And yet we need not fail. If we will judge this self and bring it to the cross, we can have glorious victory. We may be over-overcomers.

Not only does the cross deal death to self, but it likewise deals death to sin. The carnal nature is the basis of all wrongdoing in the child of God. It is to this that Satan appeals. It affords him ground for his work. It is the enemy *within* which traitorously opens the door to the one without. This nature is our heritage from the fall. In the Bible the word "sins"—plural—is used to denote our transgressions, the overt acts of sin, while the word "sin"—singular—is used to denote the source of the transgressions. We must ever distinguish between the *root* and the *fruit*. Out there in the orchard stands a tree laden with fruit. Gather the harvest and in another season you will have another crop. The tree is continually bearing, and we may continually carry away the fruit, but there will never cease to be fruit so long as the tree lives. The fruit represents the sins, the actual transgressions. They may all be forgiven to-night, but to-morrow there may be another crop. Jesus died on the cross to purchase redemption for us from the actual transgressions as well as to deal with the root of the matter. When we

come to God and repent, he forgives and blots out all the sins that are against us; but the tree of the carnal nature remains in us and there will soon be another crop. What are we to do about this carnal nature?

Let us study the Word very carefully here, for there is great danger of our going astray at this point. There are many confusing voices in the world. Let us see just what the Bible teaches; nothing more, nothing less.

There are two chief dangers. One is to suppose that the old nature can be so entirely removed as never to cause us any further bother. We may have it taken out as we would have an aching tooth removed, that by one transaction we can have the troublesome question settled forever.

The other position is to accept it as a necessary evil—to be hopeless before it and to feel that we must submit to a halting, failing life that knows very little of victory. Those who have this view assume an attitude of passivity and drift with the tide.

Neither of these positions is the correct one. The Word does not teach that the old nature is annihilated. To take that view is to go too far, to go beyond what is written. It does teach that the old nature is crucified with Christ. He not only took the "handwriting of ordi-

## 154 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

nances [the bill of indictment] that was against us out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14), but he took "our old man" with him there also. Compare Romans vi. 6 with Hebrews ii. 14:

### *Romans vi. 6.*

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

### *Hebrews ii. 14.*

14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Exactly the same word is used in Hebrews for "destroy" that is used in Romans. It is the verb "katargeo," and literally means "to render inert, or inactive, to rob of power." The significance of this is seen at once when we compare these two verses. Identically the same thing is said with reference to the devil in Hebrews that is said with reference to the "old man" in Romans. If in Romans we hold that the carnal nature is so destroyed as not to exist any longer, we must take the same position with reference to the devil in Hebrews. The teaching that the carnal nature can be gotten rid of by one transaction, then, is manifestly not a scriptural one.

But we are not to settle down in passivity and submit to any manifestation of the carnal nature as of something which cannot be helped, and so must be endured. By no means. If the

first position is false, this is more so. There is no excuse for a sinning religion. John tells us that we are to be overcomers. Our old man is crucified with him; and just as Jesus has overcome the devil and triumphs over him, just so he renders inert the old nature and we may have constant victory over it too. But the secret of victory is in reckoning ourselves dead to sin. (Rom. vi. 11.) The *fact* of God's crucifying our old man must be followed by the *act* of reckoning on our part. This is the same as in the case of Christ's "tasting death for every man." That *fact* must be accompanied by the *act* of appropriating that death if it is to be of value in any particular case.

Sin will absolutely destroy the prayer life. If we have any of the works of the flesh enumerated by Paul in Galatians v. 19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like," there can be no real praying on our part. They must be gotten rid of. Many of these things will be known at once to be wrong; but how many times we indulge some of the other things and do not see any real wrong in them, albeit they will destroy our power to

pray. Divisions, jealousies, and these more obscure sins are just as deadly to our prayer life as adultery or idolatry. The way to victory over all these things is the way of the cross.

But in order for the cross to effect any deliverance for us there must be an honest recognition of the need. So long as we excuse ourselves by calling them "infirmities" we are not going to have deliverance. If one suppose the carnal nature to be utterly eradicated and then find certain evidences of its remaining, one is driven to conclude that there is error somewhere. It is most distressing to see one claiming to have no remains of carnality in his nature and yet bursts of passion giving strong evidence of its existence.

But we are not to lie down before carnality and confess defeat. There is glorious victory and that victory is in the cross. Sin is crucified and we are to take the position of death toward it. When we do this we have victory.

Finally, we are crucified to the world. Worldliness is utterly destructive to a prayer spirit. To be in conformity to the world is to be in a position where no real praying can be done.

"The world is too much with us;

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."



The worldly-minded Christian never prevails with God in prayer. But such is the power of the world that we find it silently getting a hold upon us even when we would deny it and be delivered from it. It is only possible to be entirely free from the world as we bring it to the cross. When we realize that we have been crucified to it, and it has been crucified to us, it is possible to overcome it. We take the place of death to its allurements and its calls.

The cross is seen, therefore, to occupy a central place in our prayer life. The Christian who does not know something of the power of the cross will never know much of the power of prayer. It gives value to prayer because there Jesus Christ purchased for us deliverance from the guilt of sin and entrance into the family of God. He purchased for us victory over temptation. He purchased power over Satan, sin, and the world, and as we come to him in the power of this complete and perfect work, we get the ear of God and prevail. It is at the cross that we become "prayer warriors" and learn how to win glorious victories in the name of our crucified, risen Lord.

"O Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red  
Life that shall endless be,"

## X

### CULTIVATING THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

**I**T is a truism to say that nothing comes without effort. If any value is to be obtained, we must exert ourselves. A field may lie uncultivated and unsown, but the only crop produced will be one of noxious weeds. If a golden harvest of grain is to be reaped, there must be the breaking up of the fallow ground, the unsparing use of harrow and roller, to break the clods and get the soil pulverized and ready; after that the sowing of the seed, the untiring cultivation, the patient waiting, then comes the glad harvest.

If one is to acquire an education, there must be the tireless application—the long days in the schoolroom, the burning of the midnight oil. What a wonderful thing it would be if our parents or grandparents could will us a complete classical or practical education as they can will us a field or a bank account! But such a thing can never be. Only the gross things of earth can be so transmitted. If we are to have the finer things of life, we must toil for them.

In a school reader of my boyhood days there was the story of two boys who were discussing the future, as boys often do. One of them said: "I should like to go to sleep, like Rip Van Winkle, take a long rest, and wake up to find myself thoroughly educated and rich—in possession of the things I want."

Said the other lad: "Such a thing as that is impossible; and, anyhow, it is not desirable. I had rather apply myself to the securing of those things by hard work, and I mean to do just that. You may sleep if you want to: I am going to *work*." He had not only the right idea; but the right purpose.

So with things of the spiritual life. In our moments of vision we become eager to be efficient Christians, and we think we will be—and that is a laudable thing; but it cannot be done by dreaming. It means work. If we are to be prayer-warriors and efficient in that phase of Christian work, we cannot reach it by dreams. It must have the very best there is in us of consecration and devotion.

We saw in our first study that prayer is instinctive. But right here is a danger. We are prone to leave it to our impulses. We will pray when in some special need, or when the impulse comes to pray; but such an attitude is destructive of the best things in the prayer life,

Some of us are like the man whose house was being washed away and he was in great peril. He began to cry to God, and said: "O Lord, I never did ask you for anything; and if you will get me out of this trouble, I never will bother you again." That is the danger that faces everyone who leaves prayer only for emergencies. It is ignoble to treat God so.

In order to become real prayer-warriors, there must be first of all a realization of the need of prayer, and that requires *knowledge*. There are some things that we must know before we are prepared to act. The prophet says: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

We must know that there is a real fight on. We are tempted to lose sight of that fact. Our fathers used to sing:

"Am I a soldier of the cross,  
 A follower of the Lamb,  
 And shall I fear to own his cause,  
 Or blush to speak his name?  
 Must I be carried to the skies  
 On flowery beds of ease,  
 While others fought to win the prize,  
 And sailed through bloody seas?  
 Are there no foes for me to face?  
 Must I not stem the flood?  
 Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
 To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight, if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord;  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by thy word."

But we do not sing that very much any more. Somehow there has grown up such an affinity between the world and the Church that to speak of this "vile world" is almost like casting a reflection upon our own family. But the world is vile and is no friend to grace. If it seems to be a friend, it is because grace is clad in bedraggled skirts. James in his epistle speaks in no uncertain terms of friendship with the world when he says: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

In order to prevail in prayer, we must know that the world is in enmity against God, and a worldly atmosphere is utterly destructive of the spirit of prayer. We must live our lives separated from the world. That is the trouble with modern Christianity. It is not totally separated from the world. Paul exhorts us in 2 Corinthians vi. 14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what



concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

There can be no stronger exhortation given than our Lord here utters. We must know, if we are to be able to prevail in prayer, that worldliness utterly destroys the spirit and effectiveness of praying.

We are here speaking for a principle, so we will not descend to particular application. We ought to say, however, that this will absolutely settle the question of amusement and recreation. If we will bring all our social and recreational indulgences to this touchstone—viz., Does this hinder my desire and ability to really pray?—we will be able to know whether we can longer indulge those things. There are certain frivolities which destroy all ability to approach God. These are not for us.

This is not to be a "joy-killer" either, for

there is much wholesome and sound pleasure that is like a tonic. It refreshes us, and we can be all the better for it.

It was said of C. H. Spurgeon, the great London preacher, that he glided as naturally from laughter to prayer as though he lived in both realms.

Someone has written of our Lord as "Jesus, the Joyous Companion," and we know that on the last night on which he was with the disciples he spoke of joy eight times and of peace three times. He prayed that these companions of his might have his joy fulfilled in themselves. These two things, joy and peace, the world has not, neither can it know them. Their substitute is "fun." Now any fun that hinders prayer is of the world and not of God. Young people can have real joy and peace in the Lord and their prayer life will be nourished and grow.

Another thing we ought to know is that the devil is not dead, but that he is our opponent and will hinder our prayer life and utterly destroy it if possible.

The Bible knows a *personal* devil. Jesus Christ in his temptation in the wilderness was not engaged in "shadow boxing." He met a real antagonist there, and the glory of it is that he overcame. One of the most cheering verses in the whole Bible is the last word He said

directly to his disciples in the upper room that night—and the last before the tragedy of Gethsemane and the victory of Calvary: “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The “good cheer” in that is that we, in him, may overcome.

But he did not overcome without a fight; and that fight in the Mount of Temptation shows us the enmity and determination of our enemy. Peter says: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” He is not asleep on the job, and he is never so happy as when he can get us to ignore his being. If he can get us to doubt his existence and attribute what evil we see to men, or to some other agency, he has us already more than half conquered.

Paul knew, as few men have known, the existence of a personal devil and his organized kingdom at war with Christ and the Christian, and he says to the Ephesians: “For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despoticisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world—the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare.” (Eph. vi. 12, Weymouth.)

Now, in order to win any victories in prayer, we need to know these two things: that the

spirit and atmosphere of the world are against prayer, and the devil and all the forces in his control are against prayer. Therefore we may expect difficulties on every hand when we go to pray. There will be a feeling of deadness and lack of interest many times that, if yielded to, will defeat us at the very start. Then there will be interruptions. O how these come! The devil will see to it that we are not going to find the way to prayer entirely easy.

Let us look, then, at some of the essentials to prayer—first of all, the *will* to do it. We are anxious for this series of studies to result in this one thing—that you will determine to be prayer-warriors!

There is an effective service that you can render your Lord and your Church in prayer that no amount of activity besides will make up for. There are plenty of people who will do the chores of the Church. Will you not determine to do the *prayer thing*? A. J. Gordon once said: "You can do more than pray after you have prayed; but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." O, get the vision of the possibilities of prayer! Prayer can do anything that God can do. Enter into partnership with God to change the whole condition in your Church and neighborhood. God loves to have you undertake something for him and

see it wrought out, and you can do it, "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Cor. x. 4.)

But having got the desire to do this, there must be the determined will to do it. These are busy days, and your time will be full; but if you really determine to pray, God will help you wonderfully. Luther gave prayer a place in his life second to nothing. He replied to one inquirer: "I have so much to do to-day that I cannot get on with less than three hours' prayer." He had a motto: "*Est bene orasse, est bene studisse*"—"To have prayed well is to have studied well."

One must determine to pray. One can do as our Lord did and find that it brings wonderful blessing. I have tasted it and I have nowhere had sweeter fellowship than in spending a night in prayer; or, rising early, "a great while before day," "departing into a deserted place" and there praying.

There is an old proverb, and no truer one was ever uttered, "Where there is a will, there is a way."

Most of our plea about not having time to pray is false. We may think that we have not; but if there is a real determination to do it, we will find time. We always find time to eat,



and to do those things we desire to do. If you will determine to do it, your battle is half won.

Sometimes a preacher complains that he is too busy to pray and to cultivate his own spiritual life by intensive Bible study—not for others, but for his own soul. Then he is too busy to have power—for a preacher prayerless in private is powerless in public.

Having determined to pray, the next thing is to determine to be *unhurried* in it. We cannot pray victoriously by the clock. It is better to have thirty minutes set apart for prayer than not to pray at all; but the only way to have real victory in prayer is to take time to forget time. To enter into real fellowship with the Lord—and that is what prayer is, you know—requires time.

You cannot build character by instantaneous exposures, as you would take a kodak picture. You cannot grow a great tree in a night. A mushroom comes up in a night and perishes in a night, but a great tree takes time.

It is a sublime thing to go into the groves of big trees in California. I love to sit among them and meditate. Then I feel as Tennyson did when he beheld the sea and said:

“Break, break, break,  
On thy cold, gray rocks, O Sea!  
And I would that I could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.”

168 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

The other day I sat in the grove of big trees near Santa Cruz and thought: When George Washington and the colonists were fighting for liberty, this grove was old and hoary. When Columbus crossed the deep and replied to the murmurings of the crew, "Sail on, and on, and on!" this grove was standing in solemn silence and hoary age. When the battle of Hastings was fought and the English language was born, these trees were no infants. Yea, even when Jesus Christ wept and prayed, sweating blood beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane, when

"Into the woods my Master went,  
Clean forspent, forspent,  
Into the woods my Master came,  
Forspent with love and shame.

Out of the woods my Master went,  
And he was well content;  
Out of the woods my Master came,  
Content with love and shame"—

then these same trees were standing here on this Western coast, known to none save to Him who was building them. Even when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and from a company of slaves **built a nation**, some of these trees were alive.

If then it takes time to build a thing like that, how much more does it take time to build human character which is to endure until "the

stars grow cold and the leaves from the judgment book unfold!"

Take the Bible and thoughtfully read a portion of the Word. Let God speak to you from the printed page. After having read thus for some time, you will find your mind cleared of extraneous matter and will be able to realize the presence of God.

One great adventurer in the life of prayer said that when he first began the practice of prayer he would immediately on rising go to his knees; but he found that sometimes it would be thirty minutes before he became conscious of the presence of God in such a manner as to be actually able to pray. Later he adopted the habit of reading portions of the Word, and he would be almost or quite immediately conscious of the presence of God.

Do not let us deceive ourselves by thinking that if we just kneel and say words we are praying. We are never quite praying until there is the consciousness of another Presence, even the Lord. When we have come to this place of consciousness of his companionship, we are ready to pray.

The Lord says: "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob." (Isa. xli. 21.) The Lord delights to have us order our argument, even

as a lawyer would to convince a judge. To such prayer he gladly listens, and we get things from God. We should have our prayer list, our "Book of Remembrance," and keep a record of the answers he gives. How delightful to go over these answers and confirm our faith! In this way Christian character is built. This is "creative prayer."

All of this, of course, emphasizes the matter of *definiteness* in prayer which we have already studied. This clear and definite keeping of the Word before us, keeping in mind God's presence, and noting specific answers, will prevent the degeneration of prayer into a slipshod performance that goes all over the world and strikes no point particularly. Sheet lightning is harmless. It goes all over the sky and the earth and does nothing. It is a beautiful and harmless pyrotechnic display of a summer evening; but when the dark storm clouds send out their daggers in the swift bolts that cut straight to the point of attraction, there is no dodging. So prayer that covers all subjects lightly produces no result; but the definite, fervent prayer offered in the name of Jesus, on the ground of the shed blood, for a particular thing, that makes a note of the date the promise is actually claimed, keeps books with God and he delights to honor such praying.

Having presented our plea and urged it before the Lord, holding it always subject to his will—and if we have actually approached it as indicated, we are now very conscious of our Lord's presence and of his approval or disapproval of our petition—let us *claim* the answer.

It is quite certain that many times we lose a blessing because we do not claim it. God is willing to give it to us; but he wants us to exercise our faith by claiming the thing we are asking, for he says: "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isa. lxxv. 24.) And he assures us: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.) Our attitude should be one of accepting the things we ask for and thanking him for them. This is claiming what he has for us.

O that we might learn the lesson! God wants us for PRAYER-WARRIORS. He needs us and we need to learn the lesson. Let us not imagine that it is something for a few extraordinarily pious people or for a few bedridden saints who can serve in no other way. Thank God, many an invalid has learned on the bed of pain what we all might know in health, that



this is the greatest place of service to be found. God help us to learn it.

The Civil War gave us an example of a practical and highly successful soldier who was a devout man of prayer. When Stonewall Jackson prayed, things happened. One of the noted generals of the Northern army told Bishop Hendrix that his own prayers never seemed to get through so long as Stonewall Jackson lived and prayed. This soldier said: "God had to take Stonewall Jackson to heaven in order to give the victory to the North."

The Spanish-American War produced one outstanding hero—Captain Hobson—and he was a man of prayer. The World War produced one outstanding hero from the ranks of the privates—Sergeant York—and he, likewise, was a man of prayer. Church history is going to say that Bishop Lambuth was one of the greatest men our Church ever produced. He was an apostle of prayer.

No activity can substitute for prayer. Do not wait until you have lost years of precious victory before you learn the secret. Begin now. Do not wait until you have read a lot of books on the subject. Begin the practice of prayer, and God will teach you its blessed secrets.

It is noble to pray. It is to link one's self up with Omnipotence, and in the realm of prayer the Christian approaches Omnipotence.

Prayer is the most dynamic force intrusted to man. Electricity, including radio, is usually considered the greatest, and no doubt is the greatest, of the natural forces; but it touches only *one* world, while prayer, bringing into sway the supernatural, affects *three* worlds—God in his heaven, man on the earth, and the Satanic forces in the world of darkness. God puts no limit to the prayer of faith offered in his name. It is only our unbelief, with its roots in disobedience, or our failure to wield the weapon he puts in our hands, that limits the possibilities.

But prayer, like the great forces of nature, is silent, hidden away, and never obtrudes itself. It yields its richest power, however, to the persistent, unhurried, tireless search of the student.

By a continuous search in his laboratories, Edison has discovered and given to the world many of the great secrets of electricity. These did not come to him by chance; but rising early in the morning, toiling into the night, laboring while others slept, he pursued the elusive secret until he had uncovered it. So it must be with us in our pursuit of the secrets of the prayer life. We cannot be men of leisure. We cannot

## 174 *The Most Dynamic Thing in the World*

spare ourselves. We must "redeem the time." This greatest of dynamic forces, being hidden, must also be sought with diligence if we would uncover it.

To live victorious prayer lives we must be content with that which is not spectacular. The mightiest forces are the unseen forces. No one ever yet beheld the force of gravity, and yet it holds the world in place as it swings about the sun in its orbit and holds to the earth the things which cover its surface.

Human nature loves the spectacular—the *seen*. In the Christian life, just as in nature, the most dynamic things are the *unseen*. The man who had most influence in Sodom was one who was never seen on its streets. When God would destroy that wicked city, he listened not to the prominent citizens of the place, but to the lone herdsman on the hill; and Abraham's prayer wrought effectually for the doomed city, until his limit of asking was reached.

If we will learn the secret of prevailing prayer, learn that the Holy Spirit mightily moves us to pray, that the cross gives value to our praying, and that earnest, persistent, diligent cultivation of the prayer life will develop us in the use of this dynamic, creative force, then we will truly be colaborers with God, "eager to satisfy him." (2 Cor. v. 10, Moffatt.)



"I come to thee, my God and King,  
As dawns the light of this new day,  
In deepest thankfulness and praise  
That thy great love has been my stay.  
Let me to-day, my Father, die  
With him whom I would satisfy.

May nothing that I do to-day  
Bring sorrow to thy loving heart.  
Give grace, dear Father, that my life  
May thine own tender love impart;  
But O, above all else I pray  
That I may please my Lord to-day.

Help me to win the fight to-day  
Through him who died that I might win.  
Give me to know his victory  
O'er all the evil hosts of sin.  
Let me, by precious blood applied,  
Be cleansed till thou art satisfied.

Cleanse me from secret sin to-day,  
Reveal the flesh that hinders thee;  
Work out thy plan—complete the work  
That thou hast longed to do in me.  
May my vile flesh be crucified  
Until my Lord is satisfied.

Wilt thou, my God, whose mighty Power  
Will never fail to keep thine own,  
Prepare me, as thou seest best,  
To faultless stand before thy throne.  
A mighty work, but he who died  
Will then with me be satisfied."